

BRUTARIAN

MAGAZINE

NUMBER 23 MUSIC-ART FILM & MORE 4 DOLLARS

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**HORROR WRITER
PETER STRAUB**

**PUNK PIONEER
MIKE WATT**

A LAST INTERVIEW WITH
**AFRICAN MUSIC LEGEND
FELA KUTI**

**PORN ROCKERS
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MISTRESS J**



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"If you really want to hurt your parents, and you don't have the nerve enough to be a homosexual, the least you can do is go into the arts."

-Kurt Vonnegut



Illustration: Mark Poutenis

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BRUTARIAN speaks with Nigeria's late, great musician and angry man



Fela Kuti's Last Stand

by Hank Bordowitz

When Fela Anikulapo Kuti died from AIDS on August 2, 1997 in Lagos, the world lost a remarkable and controversial musician. One of the few African artists to achieve any kind of impact on the rest of the world before the term "worldbeat" found its way onto header cards in record stores, Fela's large ensembles and long, incendiary jams always packed a musical wallop. More importantly, though, his lyrics packed a political punch that often put him at odds with his government. The son of a leading voice for

Nigerian nationalism, he hated the series of military dictatorships that ran his country.

"When the Europeans ruled Nigeria, I understood what free speech was about," he said. "I understood that you could say anything you wanted to say. My mother was able to operate in the European system without much harassment. If anybody wants to do what my mother did in 1947 now it is a different matter. They wouldn't even allow you to march in the street. The Europeans used to allow us to march in the streets, but now if

you march in the streets they shoot you. The problem now lies within us, and that has to be settled now. What matters now is that our own people are doing to us, which is worse."

In his teens, Fela Ransome Kuti started singing the current popular music in Nigeria at the time, *hilige*. He sang with one of the leading *hilige* bands of the 50s, the Cool Cats, while in the Nigerian equivalent of high school. Believing he could make music a profession, he convinced his parents to send him to a music school. He studied theory

and trumpet at Trinity College in London, forming a band there as well.

Back in Nigeria, he gigged around, and put together a band that blended highlife with jazz. "American musicians who play what's called jazz are just playing their roots," he maintained about his own jazz inclinations. "It's the African influence in me, that was exposed to American influence a long time ago that's just manifested itself. Although I was very influenced by it a lot at the early stages of my work as a musician, now my influences are very limited. I think my approach to my music is very cultural. The result is what you hear. Of course people hear the influence of jazz. Jazz is not jazz, it's African music."

He brought a 20 piece band to America in the late 60s, hoping to break his music there. The experiment lasted less than a year. However, during that time major strides in the civil rights and black power movements impressed him. He met members of the Black Panthers and learned more about political dissent. Fela returned to Nigeria with a new commitment to making political music, to using his voice to spur change.

"I want to move people to dance," he'd say, "but also to think. Music wants to dictate a better life, against a bad life. When you're listening to something that depicts having a better life, and you're not having the better life, it must have an effect on you.

"Music is supposed to have an effect. If you're playing music and people don't feel something, you're not doing shit. That's what African music is about.

When you hear it, something must move."

He started calling his band Africa 70, and soon they were one of Africa's most popular acts. He built compound on the outskirts of Lagos that included homes and a nightclub called The Shrine. Here he and his band would work out half hour and 45 minute long songs, and play until daybreak. Fela would pace the stage, play the keyboards, blow his tenor sax and sing about the current events in Nigeria and the rest of Africa.

"I play five hour concerts," he said, "because music is a thing of joy, man. When I play music I don't want to stop. Just play and play."

Fela's songs called out the leaders by name. He accused them of collusion with the west. He accused them of outright theft.

"When I was in prison," he cited one example, "I wanted to release my records Army Arrangement. My younger brother, Beko took the tapes to EMI just for printing. We weren't saying 'EMI to put your label on it. We just don't have a factory. We don't have the machinery to make records. EMI has this machinery so we say EMI we have our money. Print these records for us. We'll pay you and collect our records to distribute ourselves.' They still refused to print. EMI is proNigerian atrocities, also Decca. All the multinationals in Nigeria are proAfrican governments, because without being pro-African governments, they cannot make any headway. They have to be, so anything that comes between them and the government...psew, cut down."



I think my approach to my music is very cultural. The result is what you hear. Of course people hear the influence of jazz. Jazz is not jazz, it's African music.

Needless to say, his songs didn't make him very popular with the Governments that came and went with alarming frequency in Nigeria. Fela spent a good deal of time in prison for his trouble, living in some of the darkest holes Nigeria had to offer, a political prisoner who got passed from one junta to another.

African music is so intricate and beautiful, that to understand it, you really have to throw away all colonial thoughts of mind, get rid of the shit is the basis of African music, and to be able to make effective music. So, my music is African music.

"Survival is my spiritual condition," he notes. "I am very spiritual, I am very knowledgeable about myself, I know what I accomplished about myself. I know how I can improve my mind. I was using the prison as a treatment, so I was ready for any condition whatsoever. It was very bad, but I used that badness for goodness for my personal self, so coming out of it, I feel younger, stronger.

"I am also more dangerous. I'm a prisoner, a certified prisoner. A prisoner means you only have pity when you have to. People's conditions don't bother your mind because after seeing so much atrocities in prison that people's conditions outside doesn't bother you anymore. So if somebody offends you outside, you go into prison for two years, at the end of two years, it's very dangerous for this guy. Prisoners are quite dangerous people, in a good way, not in a bad way."

In 1977, 1000 armed troops stormed his compound, threw his mother from a second story window, raped some of the singers and dancers, and burned the

place to the ground. His mother died several months later from the injuries she sustained during the raid. Fela and his followers marched her coffin through the streets of Lagos, laying it on the front steps of the main government building. He released a song about it called "Coffin For Head Of State."

After his mother's death, he and the band went into self-imposed exile in Ghana. There, he changed his name from Ransome Kuti to Anikulapo Kuti.

"Ransome is an English name, and I'm not an Englishman," he said. "Anikulapo means 'one who has death in his pouch' in Yoruba."

At the same time, he married all of the female members of his entourage. He became as notorious for having nearly 30 wives as he did for his music and his politics. However, he eventually renounced these marriages and marriage in general.

"Now I don't have any wives," he said. "I have women of my children. I don't have wives any more. I don't believe in the institution of marriage anymore.

There are mothers of my children, but they don't have any say in my way of life."

He also deepened his commitment to African content in his music. "I have changed the name of my music from Afrobeat to something else since 1978. I stopped calling it Afrobeat, because Afrobeat is too commercial for me. My music is not commercial music, my music is African music. What happens with my music is that I hold myself with the entire system of African culture, not just with my country of Nigeria, because Nigeria is an artificial country. It's not a country as far as I'm concerned, and as far as many progressive Africans are concerned. That's why we talk about panAfricanism, and things. "I use the African culture to dictate the effect of my music, I use the continent as a whole. My music is not Afrobeat, it's just very pure African music, very deep African music. That's why it's such a success in Africa. All Africans can identify, regardless of different ethnic cultures, with my music. All of Africa.

Rhythmically, musically, and possibly the movement of the dancing. African music is so intricate and beautiful, that to understand it, you really have to throw away all colonial thoughts of mind. To get rid of the shit is the basis of African music, and to be able to make effective music. So, my music, since '78 is African music."

His periods of exile in Europe, America and Ghana made him very sympathetic to the many expatriate African artists who sought the greener pastures of Europe. "I'm not against that kind of situation, where musi-

cians have to go out of Africa to play. Not everybody has the same mind to stay. It's very difficult for people to stay, very difficult to make headway there. Being in France and playing African music to Europeans is good. There's nothing wrong about it. Although, I say it's better for them to stay at home and do it, but if they stay at home, it would be impossible for them to accomplish things they could accomplish out of Africa. One can't condemn that kind of decision, but I wouldn't do that because I'm a different person, I guess."

He returned to Nigeria the next year, during a brief period of civilian rule. He formed his own political party, "Movement Of The People" and ran for President. He recorded his campaign manifesto, one of popular

music's true masterpieces, *Black President* (currently available in the US as *Original Sufferhead*).

"My country," he would simply state, "needs new ideology, new systems."

In 1981, the police threw him in jail for armed robbery.

Although acquitted, he claimed to have experience hell in a jail cell. Physically battered, his throat

and mouth were damaged to the point he could no longer play his beloved tenor sax.

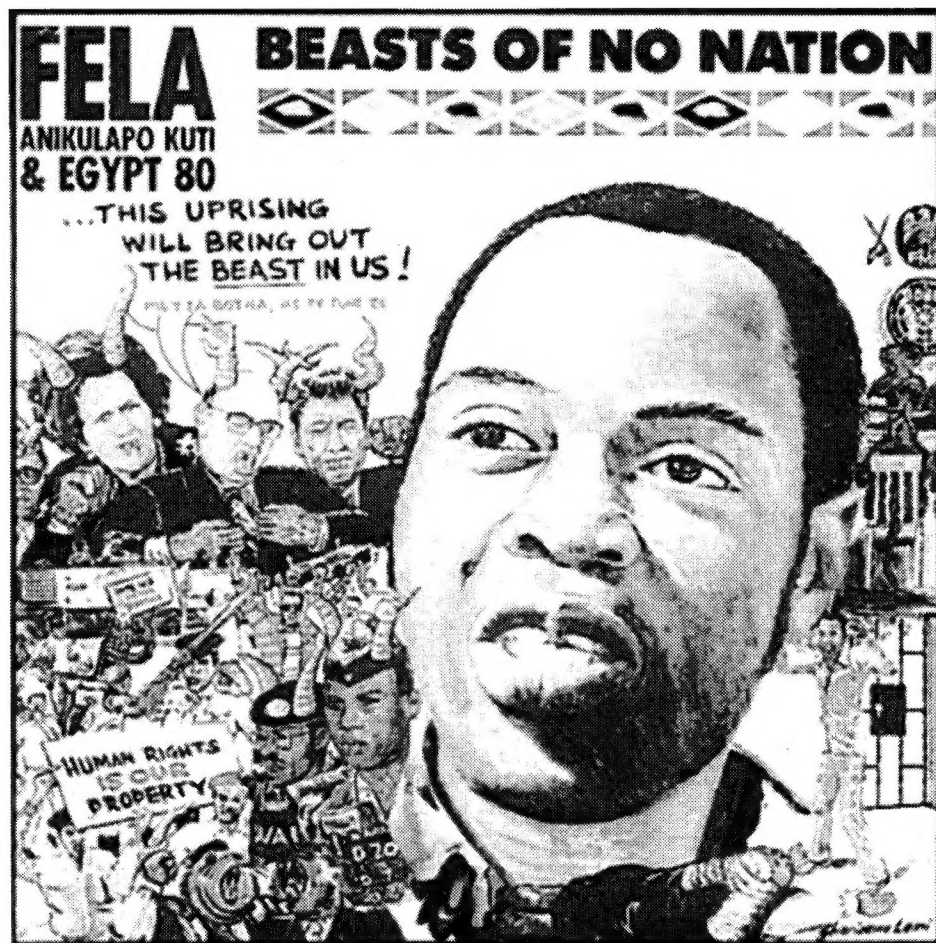
On the eve of his first American tour in nearly a decade, the police detained and then arrested him on currency smuggling. He

received a ten year sentence.

Amnesty international took up his cause. When yet another military dictatorship took power 18 months later, they freed Fela. Coincidentally, it fell just in time for him to play the Amnesty International Conspiracy of Hope concert broadcast worldwide. He sat in on percussion with the Neville Brothers and played piano with Ruben Blades.

"I didn't know any of them," he commented about the people he performed with at Amnesty. However, he did get to meet Yoko Ono backstage. "Oh yes. I knew about her. When I was introduced I was really delighted to meet her. I was introduced to many people there, that I never met before, that heard about me, also. It was a nice experience."

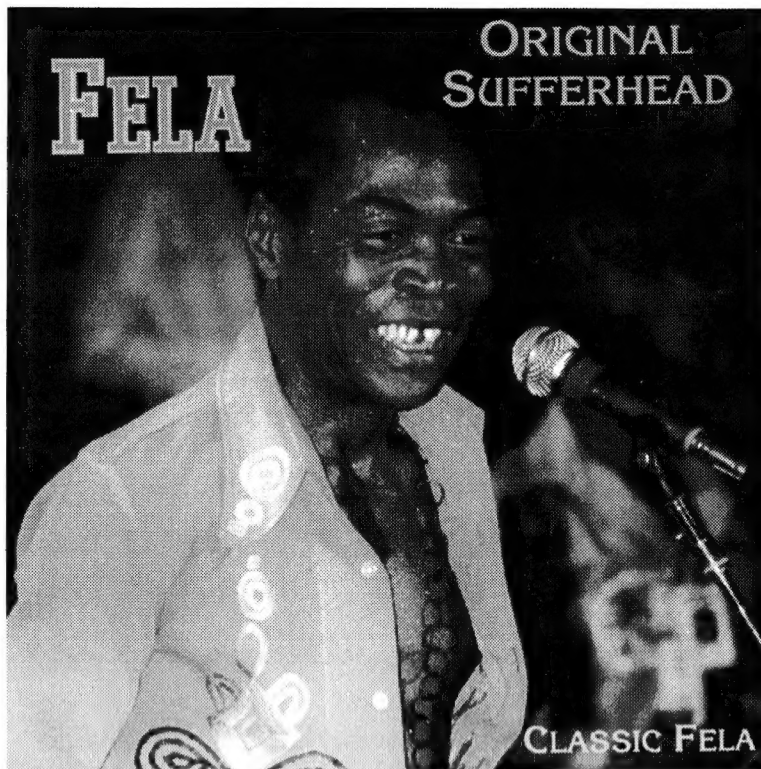
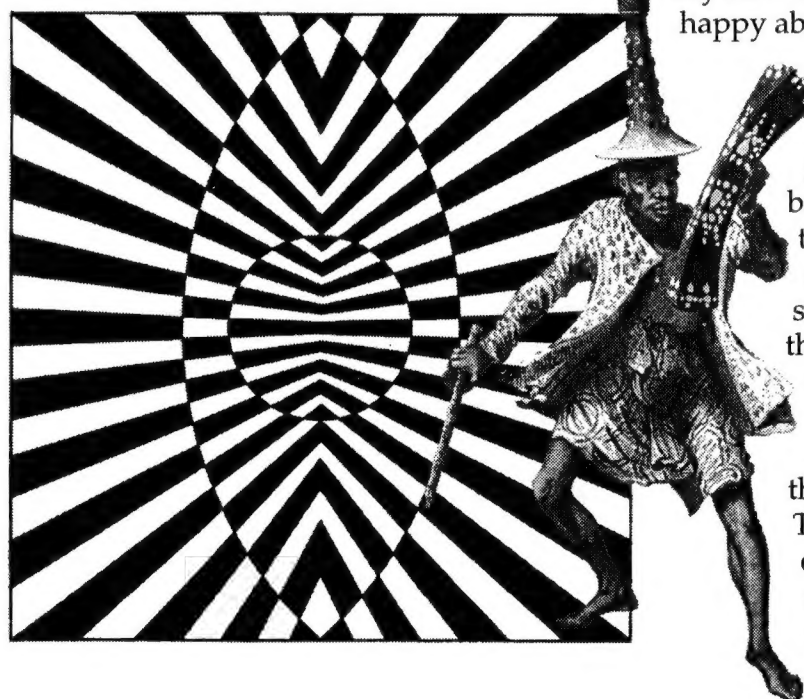
He held a press conference to discuss his release. His attorney opened the proceedings by reading a letter from the judge who released him. "The letter of release has two parts. It says 'congratulations on your release.' The other part says 'we hope you remain as law abiding as you have always been.'"



"I would like to say how gratified I am for the support that all of you gave me while I was in prison," Fela said. "I want to tell you all that I appreciate the support. It has given me the complete belief that this world is for one people, and the whole different races of this world are one people, just different colors and things. I intend to enhance this concept of Human Internationalism."

At the conference, he said that he would be touring the US, and he would bring his entire entourage with him. "It has been my wish for the last 10 years (to perform in America)," he said. "I've been rehearsing myself and the whole band. We have 28 on stage. I always take my full shows everywhere. I don't do half."

"I'm rehearsing now, some new music, new sounds. I want to come out with a better body, a better concept than I had before, much stronger. If possible. I'm writing music and rehearsing, but I'm not performing publicly.



"As a matter of fact, by the time I went to prison, I couldn't play my sax, my tenor sax, because the beating I got in 1981 destroyed one part of my body, I was almost walking down. I couldn't carry my sax. Now I'm trying to play my sax without the sling. It's not easy, but I'm going to come out playing heavy. Play my sax. I'm very happy about that."

"So, I used the prison to get my body together, and at the same time thinking of music, not composing, just thinking. Then I started to think of some music I would

write when I come out. Then when I came out, I started to write, not what I was thinking when I was in prison, but what I was thinking now that I was out of prison. Because my mind's developed, and my spiritual concept of life is...different, the music is

going to be much more effective."

He also said that he would revive Movement of the People. "I will (run for President) if necessary. I say if necessary for two reasons: I seem to see the downfall of democracy in Africa as it is now. And it seems as if in Nigeria now, the position now is that one day they are just going to come and wake me up and say 'Fela, please come and be president.' It may not even be necessary to have an election because my popularity is too extreme. I have a feeling I wouldn't even have to run for it, I might just be invited.

"People who are going to rule people," he added, "should understand about pain, understand human feelings, understand what suffering is all about. Then they can lead. People who don't understand these things should not even be leading. That's why I think I can now lead effectively. I can understand suffering. The kinds of pains I have, I wouldn't wish on you."

When asked if he had enough of prison for one lifetime, he replied querulously, "I don't give a fuck about that. If you are hoping to stay out of prison then you'll never get things done."

"We want to see an Africa where people can come and go as they like, and just enjoy themselves. We are not saying that pan-Africanism is going to save the world. We hope that it will open the eyes of the less progressive leaders of the world. What is stopping this from happening is the evil minds of the leaders of the world today. Once we get leaders with good minds, you will see less harassment of the citizens of the world."

The question of what he was listening to came up. "I like some records," he noted. "I don't know the names of the tunes or

the artists. But I like some records I hear. But not all. I had a problem the past nine years. I haven't been able to listen to music a lot, because I didn't have a stereo in my place. After the Kalakuta republic burned down. So I have not been able to listen to music. During my incarceration made it worse. I listen to other peoples records, I go to dis-cotheques in Lagos."

One of the things he was most enthusiastic about was the reception he got at the Amnesty International shows. He pledged several shows as benefits to Amnesty, and hoped to bring the conspiracy of hope to Nigeria.

"I was happy I met many people at the Amnesty show," he said. "I spoke to Little Steven today. We had a get together to discuss things about future

ideas. I'm planning of having a kind of big freedom thing in Nigeria. For three days we'll bring in artists from all over the world to perform. Maybe it's a good idea think of things like that to give Africans some kind of spiritual force for their freedom beliefs and political struggles. I'm thinking along those lines now.

"Now that many musicians are getting very political, it makes me very happy, because I have maintained a long time ago that musicians should make political music. I'm very happy now. Musicians will soon have to start to play political music. The idea is spreading, and that makes me happy. I'm thinking of bringing musicians together, in the same platform as musical shows like this (Amnesty) to perform in

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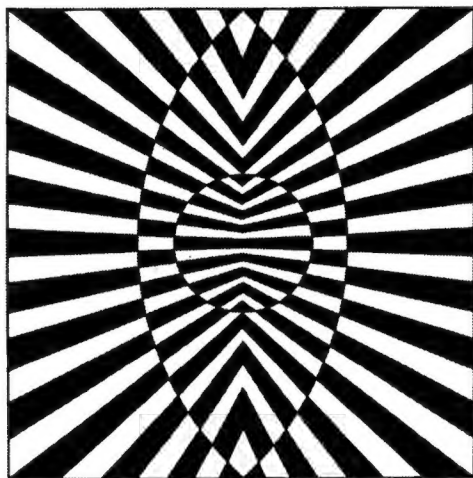
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Africa. I don't know how successful it will be, but I think it's a good idea.

"My popularity at home is very immense. It will be very difficult for the government to refuse that kind of proposal. I don't see how easy it would be for them not to support it.

"Everybody in Africa from north to south loves my music. Everybody in the government has my records. They don't want to see me, they don't want to hear my voice alive, but they like the records. They'd prefer to hear me dead."

The concert never came off. He did rebuild Kalakuta. By this time, the current Nigerian government had forbidden anyone to call a home "republic." Fela countered by calling it the Kalakuta Empire. His rebuilt Shrine brought in thousands of people a night for his music.

Fela continued to tour the world as well, playing venues like the Apollo in New York. He also continued his skirmishes with the law. In 1993, he was jailed for murder, and eventually acquitted. In 1996, Kalakuta was again attacked by gunmen. Later in the year, he and about 100 other people including several mothers of his children, were arrested for marijuana use by

drug agents. They tried to reform him, but Fela had been smoking for longer than many of the agents had been alive.

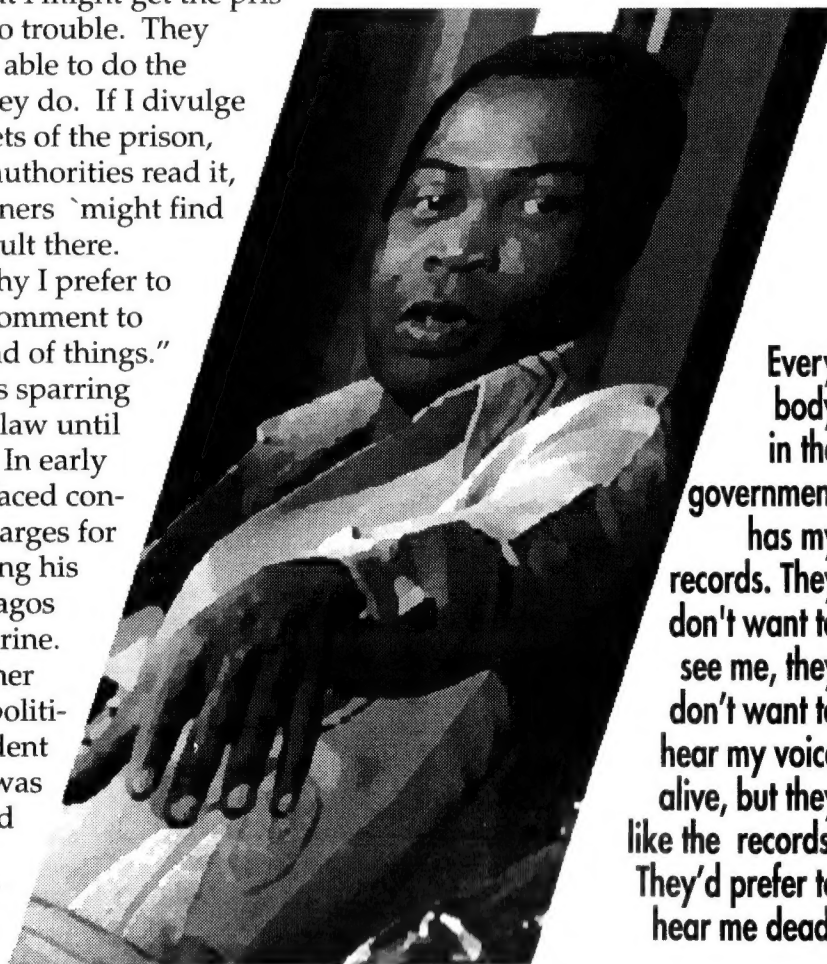
"I've been smoking since 1966, December," he recalled. "It was a girl that turned me on to it. It was in Lagos. In 1975, or 1976, I went into cocaine. Then I went into LSD. I smoked some heroin around '77, '78. I later found out that these things were deleterious to my health. So I left the shit. I stopped cocaine, heroin, LSD, all that shit. It was killing my prick. I couldn't fuck. So I abandoned those things in 1980."

Throughout his prison stays, he was able to continue his use of pot, but would say no more about it. "I'd like to keep that matter secret," he said of the drug situation in the Nigerian prisons, "because if I were to say anything about that I might get the prisoners into trouble. They won't be able to do the things they do. If I divulge the secrets of the prison, and the authorities read it, the prisoners might find life difficult there. That's why I prefer to say no comment to those kind of things."

He was sparring with the law until the end. In early July, he faced contempt charges for not leaving his rented Lagos based Shrine. His brother Beko, a political dissident as well, was sentenced to 15 years for alleged

participation in a coup plot.

Over the past two years, Fela had not done much in the way of performing or recording, and rumors about his ill health ran rampant. It was said he refused both Western and Traditional tribal medicine. Announcing the passing of Fela to the press, his other brother, Dr. Olikoye Ransome Kuti, former deputy director general of the World Health Organization, confirmed that his brother had died of complications from AIDS. He used the announcement as a forum to accuse the Nigerian government of failing to protect its people from the disease. Fela's son, Femi, continues to perform. His brothers continue to speak out. Death might have escaped Fela's pouch, but his legacy continues. ■



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body
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WATT THE

BRUTARIAN TALKS WITH FORMER MINUTEMAN, HOSE-BOY AND BALLHOG MIKE WATT

I remember when I was young always wanting to hang out with the older kids who had cars, smoked dope, drank liquor, and were cool. Well, San Pedro native Mike Watt fits the mold of that older, more developed street kid. In the early '80s, he was

in the Minutemen, a great, unheralded avant-rock trio whose lead singer/ guitarist D. Boon died in a van accident in '85. At the urging of Ohio fan Ed Crawford, Watt picked up the pieces and, along with Crawford, formed the ambitious Firehose. They put out six albums from '86 to '93 (*Flyin' The Flannel* and *if'n* being personal faves).

In early September at a Columbia Records release party, I met the crazed Watt while he was drinking Bourbon and Coke. In fact, when an eager waitress took his alcohol fueled concoction before he was done with it, Watt complained about "the overly efficient

help." With cheap shit bass in hand (he bought it for \$50, then had the nerve to return it the next day), we walked to NYC's dismal, sweaty Elbow Room, where Watt showcased material from his second solo disc, the loosely coined "punk rock opera" *Contemplating The Engine Room* recorded with jazz-informed guitarist Nels Cline and drummer Stephen Hodges. The basic story according to Watt: "this guy runs away from a farm town, joins the Navy, finds a crew, they get their routine together, and pull into a port and have some R & R. They get drunk, konk out. The boilerman sleepwalks, falls in the water, and drowns. But it's not a documentary; it's mostly about the Minutemen. The boilerman is D. Boon. The fireman is George Hurley and I'm the machinist. The whole boat is like the old SST Records family. I mention Husker Du and the Meat Puppets. We were all on this one big boat."



HELL?!



INTERVIEW BY JOHN FORTUNATO

ARTWORK BY KING GEO

BRUTARIAN: Yeah. The boat down the underground tunnel for bands not getting enough popularity even though they're better than the dogshit on the airwaves.

WATT: Even with all the shit that went down, we always thought this was not supposed to happen. We played around, travelled about. So what if it was eleven guys in the van? At least we were doing it. I look back at those days and realize that's what made me what I am now. Be true to yourself and let the freak flag fly. Fuck the people who hated punk. It was big in England, but over here everyone called you fag. The people who really hated us were the rock and rollers. They were running the studios. We used to have to play at old Polish and Ukrainian Halls.

BRUTARIAN: Commercial radio and classic rock stars with big heads could eat my ass. Pretentious loads!

WATT: But we learned to be self-reliant and create our

own little world. We made our own little record labels and our own club circuit. Ani Di Franco and the Riot Girls with Kill Rock Stars Records do that now. That spirit is still here. And I think we helped build that up. And I hope the door never gets shut.

BRUTARIAN: How bad does MTV Suck?

WATT: I look at MTV like a telephone poll everybody wants to put their flyer on. I heard it's mostly game shows now. Are Jenny Mc Carthy's tits plastic though?

BRUTARIAN: They probably are. And that's such an insecurity problem when you have to increase tit size. What's the matter? Some guy isn't going to fuck you because you're flat.

WATT: A friend of mine who's a talent agent in Hollywood told me almost every girl on t.v. has plastic knobs.

BRUTARIAN: By the way, my friend told me to ask you if we should open trade with Cuba to get good cigars.

WATT: And help break the Mafia - the cigar mob? I think if we get half our shoes from Red China, we could lighten up with the cigars from Cuba. As soon as Castro is gone, it's over. He has a one man system. People are starving. But the U.S. just needs a country to kick around. I think we should open up the market completely. I think I should play there. Why should I have to go to Europe instead of playing Latin America.

BRUTARIAN: Right. In fact, *Fireman Hurley* has Spanish guitar, Latin rhythms, and danceable bass lines.

WATT: I had been asked by people to use nylon strings on my record. I said O.K. And that Nels is so easygoing. He's no stuck up motherfucker like most goddamn guitar players.

BRUTARIAN: On *Ballhog Or Tugboat*? J. Mascis plays a little guitar. I heard he's a rather difficult character.

WATT: He's just a shy kid. Well, he talks slow so people



can't handle that. They think he's a slacker. I think he's a good cat. He's out touring again.

BRUTARIAN: What was the first concert you attended as a kid?

WATT: T. Rex at the Long Branch Auditorium in 1971. D. Boon's dad sat with us in the crowd. He was smiling. He didn't know anything about rock. But Marc Bolan got killed in a car accident afterwards. I visited the tree in London that killed him. That tree is all bent over from the car hitting it. I think Joey Ramone is putting together a T. Rex tribute at CBGB's for him.

BRUTARIAN: How did you originally meet D. Boon?

WATT: We were 12 when we met. In the park, by accident, he jumped out of a tree and landed on me. He thought I

was this guy Eskimo. He had memorized a whole George Carlin album. And I had never heard of George Carlin. And he's reciting all these bits, and I'm like, "Jesus Christ, this is the smartest kid I ever met" The next day he took me over his house and played the whole record. His dad was into

Buck Owens, who had all these country hits in the '60s and '70s. That was all Boon knew when I met him. I asked him, "Boon, haven't you heard of The Who, Cream, and Creedence"? That's why Creedence was such a big band for us. They were a bridge for us since D. Boon's favorite song was *Tall Dark Stranger* by Buck Owens. I told him, you got to hear some other shit. Then he liked T. Rex, Alice Cooper, Blue Oyster Cult, and Black Sabbath. We learned every Black Sabbath song.

BRUTARIAN: Then how did you mix jazz elements into the Minutemen songs?

WATT: I don't know. We never listened to Jazz as kids. Jazz was punk to us. It sounded like noise. Imagine never hearing Jazz and then

being turned on to Albert Ayler and John Coltrane. As a teen, the only bassists that mattered to me were Geezer Butler, Jack Bruce, and John Entwistle. It's weird the way things turn out.

BRUTARIAN: How come you're not a flake like most Californians are?

WATT: Because I'm originally from Virginia where my father was a sailor. We got stuck in California because of the Viet Nam War. My mother got sick of moving and got divorced. She said my dad married the Navy instead of her. The Navy is really fucked with the family. They move you every year. They yank kids out of school and tell you to report to this town in thirty days.

BRUTARIAN: What would you have done after D. Boon died in '85 if Minutemen fan Ed Crawford didn't get you back into making music as Firehose?

WATT: I was in a really bad state. I didn't want to play after D. Boon got killed. But then Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth came over with that Ciccone Youth idea. It was my idea to do Madonna's *Step Into the Groove* and *Burnin' Up* for a single. That was my way back into music. But the rest of the Ciccone Youth album is a joke. What happened is Sonic Youth told a lot of people they were going to make

their version of the Beatles' White Album. And so what they did was take my Madonna songs and built a concept around it and called it the Whitey Album. But I wasn't making fun of Madonna by covering those songs. It was a serious tribute. I went to a Madonna gig and I couldn't get over all these little girls dressed like her singing along with her. I never saw girls flock to see a girl play before, unless it was Joan Jett. It was mind boggling.

BRUTARIAN: I own some of Joan Jett's early Runaways singles, like *Cherry Bomb*. The only other girl band who rocked as hard as them in the '70s were Fanny.

WATT: Fanny was a total lesbian band with big afros.

BRUTARIAN: I didn't know they were lesbians. Sounds delectable.

WATT: Oh yeah. They were pre-Indigo (Girls). Very k.d.

BRUTARIAN: I bet k.d. lang's got a bigger dick than me.

WATT: So does Joan, I heard. You know, k.d. is actually a performance artist. She's singing torch songs now. She always reminded me of old school lesbian Phranc, who was in a band called Nervous Gender. They were these intense gay punk guys. A lot of them have since died of AIDS. They had a song with a cho-

rus that went *Jesus is just like me/ another cocksucker from Galileo/ Jesus Christ was a homosexual nymphomaniac/ a homosexual nymphomaniac*. For a Pedro guy like me to come up to Hollywood and hear this was so fuckin' bizarre. I never saw a band like that. Phranc only had one song in the band back then, and it was *My Mommy's Chest*. Punk rock was a mind blow. It wasn't these hardcore little kids from Orange county.

BRUTARIAN: Who were some of your favorite punk bands from back in the '70s?

WATT: I loved the Germs. I loved the Dils. The old X, the

Bags, I liked the whole scene. A lot of them didn't have vans so they didn't like to tour. That's why I like Black Flag. they were about taking it to the people. I think the Hollywood bands thought they were all going to get signed and become famous. Other people knew it was just a fad and they were having fun with it. But Greg Ginn (of Black Flag) knew he was going to have fun with it and take it around. He literally built that club scene that didn't exist. It was a domino effect. Kids would tell kids about gigs at their college these bands were coming around and it got

(D. Boon) had memorized a whole George Carlin album. And I had never heard of George Carlin. And he's reciting all these bits, and I'm like, "Jesus Christ, this is the smartest kid I ever met"



bigger. That's how I got signed to Columbia. We changed the way labels looked at us.

BRUTARIAN: Did Columbia ever tell you how to make your albums?

WATT: No way. Our contract wouldn't allow them to. They promised artist control with none of this demo shit.

Some artists moan at interviews about control, but they let the record labels spend a lot of money on their pretty faces. A lot of these cats get into contracts and don't protect themselves. Even Greg Ginn knew not to change the Minutemen.

BRUTARIAN: What were some of the dilemmas you faced when the Minutemen were starting out?

WATT: A lot of times D. Boon would get pulled off the stage by bouncers when we'd start our gig because they couldn't believe he was the band. I think that opened things up. When people

saw this huge guy in the band maybe they thought "I could try this." That's what I had originally thought with those punk rockers. Those guys are up there. "Why don't we go for it, D. Boon?" We thought being in a band was about good looks and costumes and knowing all the notes. We grew up with arena rock but could never see ourselves as arena rockers. Punk rock we thought we could do.

BRUTARIAN: How do you get off calling *Contemplating The Engine Room* a punk rock opera? The only real punk-related item is *The Bluejackets' Manual*.

WATT: Well, *The Bluejackets' Manual* is about boot camp. I relate punk rock to boot camp. I compare my father leaving a farm town to the Minutemen bursting open and getting away from arena rock.

BRUTARIAN: Part of the inspiration for the new album was Richard Mc Kenna's naval novel *The Sand Pebbles*.

WATT: The book is great. I read it before recording this while on tour with Perry Farrell. But the movie with Steve Mc Queen was always my favorite movie. So I try to link all these parallels. I called it a punk opera so these little kids would listen to it and give it a try. I wanted to blow minds. If I called it a concept album they'd shelve it next to Pink Floyd's *Dark*



Side of the Moon. When I first heard the word punk used to express artists, I laughed. Where I live that's a guy in jail who gets fucked for cigarettes. He holds the guys' little belt loops and is a little wuss. I thought, "Why would anyone want to call themselves that." That's a jailhouse sissy.

BRUTARIAN: What's with all the storm sounds towards the end of the album?

WATT: That's when the guy on the boat drowns. Also, the Minutemen didn't have a happy ending. D. Boon dies and I didn't know how to sugar-coat it. So it's like a tragic opera. See, you don't know this stuff unless Watt tells you. That's all Pedro waves in the background. Pedro people are all red-necks and not that enlightened. It's a harbor town. I'm staying because of the geography and it's proximity to Hollywood.

BRUTARIAN: So did you return that bass to the shop you bought it from in New York City like you said you would?

WATT: Yes.

BRUTARIAN: What type of bass guitar was it?

WATT: Lim-Gar. It was a pawnshop piece of shit. The night before I had to go on after that Cars' guy Ric Ocasek at the Elbow Room - what a laugh that was. He stalls for an hour and fuckin'

plays old 15 year old songs like *Just What I Needed*. The sound guy, Mr. Door Knob pony tail is like, "Come on Mike", rushing me. And I'm like, "Sony paid for this room so why are you rushing me?" Ocasek was never in the building, he just drove up and went onstage.

BRUTARIAN: I hope that place burns down.

WATT: So do I.

BRUTARIAN: While you were trying to eat food in the dark at your record release party, what possessed you to drink Bourbon with Coke?

WATT: Why, is that not *happening*?

BRUTARIAN: Oh, it's happening to your guts.

WATT: Well the caffeine keeps you up.

BRUTARIAN: Did you ever have to play a show while you were completely fucked up?

WATT: I can't hear pitch and I can't tune. I try to avoid that. A lot of kids think you're drunk out of your mind. But playing Minutemen songs would be too difficult.

BRUTARIAN: Yeah. Those Minutemen songs were only 90 seconds long.

WATT: With 30 parts.

BRUTARIAN: How did your stint as bassist with Perry Farrell's Porno For Pyros go?

WATT: I couldn't have done this punk rock opera without spending ten months in the

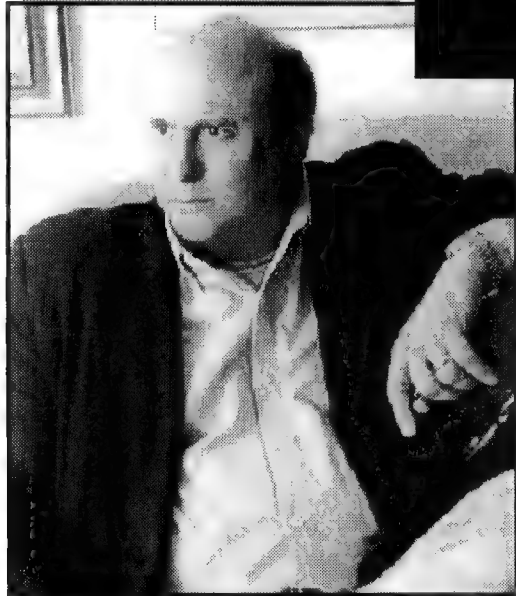
S.S. Porno. That was quite an experience. He's kind of like D. Boon. He gets onstage and sings. I was getting into all the things he had us do, like get onstage in pajamas. I was watching him. He has a great way of getting his music over. He doesn't use D minor chords. He uses movie words or theme words. That's what I did with Nels.

BRUTARIAN: Nels Cline did a great job on the Geraldine Fibbers' latest album *Butch*. What did his playing add to Watt's sound?

WATT: He's from the scene from twenty years ago, doing improv music as the Nels Cline Trio. Nels is a cat who'd never say "That's not my style" or "Oh that's not me." On *Engine Room*, I'd say to him, the sailors are laughing, and he'd just get into it. He likes making music like theatre. At first, Hodges was really thrown for a loop. I wanted to bring in a new guy. And since he worked with Tom Waits, who turns his music into stories, I decided to bring him in. He has played classical and blues. He plays glockenspiel on *In The Engine Room*. But Nels knew what to do from the start. I had a little easel there with all the songs written down. And each song had a different time of day. This song takes place before dawn. And that was that. ■

What scares you?

by
Bill Babouris



When it comes to the literature of the fantastic, Peter Straub is one of the modern world's true masters. A best-selling author in a great number of countries and a recipient of prestigious literary awards like the World Fantasy Award (twice) and the Bram Stoker Award, Straub has penned some of the most inventive and spellbinding horror novels of our times. What follows is a chat between the great man himself and Bill Babouris, an editor for OXY Publishing who will be publishing *KOKO* in Greece.

Brutarian: What was your strongest, most profound fear as a child?

Straub: I do not remember having any single, overriding fear in childhood, and I don't think that my various fears differed much from those of any other child. For a time, I was afraid of the dark, or more specifically, what might come out of the dark. Closets and the underside of the bed seemed likely recesses for Hideous Beings. Now and then, I worried about what would happen to me

if my parents died. At other times, when either my mother or father had not returned home at the customary hour, I feared that they might never come back.

I think I feared chaos, the possibility of the loss of all sense and order. And I feared the perhaps related possibility that through some sort of catastrophe, we would fall into irredeemable poverty, thereby crushing any hopes I had of working my way into a wider, richer, more generous world. That my parents had grown up during the Depression no doubt lay behind this sense of the fragility of anything like a stable existence. However, most of my memo-

ries of early childhood, up to something like the age of five, have to do with four separate themes: the real hunger to learn how to read print; the effort to try to figure things out, to understand how meaning was made, what elements contributed to the meaning of what was before me. If, for example, the particular nature of the shadows and the kind of light in a certain room, the way the light dimmed or brightened the colors of the furniture and other objects, might speak of some larger, as yet unseen coherence; loneliness; a kind of bliss, an ecstasy, produced by the universe itself out of its own living substance at those unforeseen moments when everything in the physical world suddenly declared itself as vibrant and filled with significance and worth, overflowing with Being.

Brutarian: You've mentioned in various interviews that you had been secretly cherishing the fantasy of writing fiction from a very early age, but both doubt and the realization that you would "have" to make a living made you opt for

med school. At which point did you realize that you could actually make a living out of writing?

Straub: My fantasies about medical school died early in my college career, in fact during my first semester as a freshman at the University of Wisconsin, when I noticed that not only had I no gift at all for chemistry, I kept burning myself on the bunsen burners. Thereafter, I switched over to English, figuring that I could support myself by teaching while writing at night and on weekends. That I might be able to support myself by writing suggested itself to me at the moment publishers in England and the United States accepted my first, not very good, novel. All of a sudden I was about to be paid \$3,000, enough, back in 1972, to live on for a year. Enough to live on, however humbly, was enough for me, and I abandoned graduate school for good.

Brutarian: How did it feel?

Straub: You want to know how it felt? Imagine seeing the approach of a Coast Guard rescue ship after having been adrift for three or four days in a lifeboat. That's pretty much how it felt.

Brutarian: I know that apart from horror you've ventured into other writing fields. What originally motivated you to start writing horror?

Straub: I began writing horror for a number of reasons, the most pressing of which was necessity. That is, my second novel had been rejected by the publishers who had taken my first book, and I had been rewriting it, cutting and pasting, redoing it all in the first person, for about a year. My wife was losing patience with me, not least because of the depression evoked by the rejection and all this doomed rewriting, and one had begun to hear suggestions on the order of, "Maybe you should consider going to that bookstore down the street, the one where everybody loves you because you stop in to buy at least two or three books almost every day, and ask your friends if they need a new clerk." Happily, my agent came up with another suggestion, that I forget about the book I was trying to repair and begin another. She said, "Why don't you write a Gothic?" I was none too sure what she meant by "a Gothic," but two things conspired to lead me toward horror

Although the genre had been dormant for several decades, at least in the eyes of the general reading public, Ira Levin, William Peter Blatty and Thomas Tryon had published extremely successful horror novels not long before, and so it seemed viable. And Thomas Tessier had re-introduced me to the work of H.P. Lovecraft, whom I had not read since adolescence, and recommended the work of Richard Matheson and Robert Bloch. He and I had also squandered many and many an afternoon in seedy cinemas, watching English horror movies. I enjoyed all of this, and I liked the way narrative moved in horror fiction. It was both suggestive and inexorable. It seemed to me to have a lot of range, all the more so since almost no one paid any attention to it and only a very

few people were exploring its possibilities. I thought fear was a profound emotion, and that "the uncanny" contained an interesting, almost poetic emotional charge, a potency related to its capacity for suggestion. What was uncanny seemed to invoke what was present but unknown, unseen. At the time, I thought this power had its roots in the exterior world; later, I realized that the unknown and unseen were located in oneself.

From the first I was conscious of horror's small but distinguished place in a wider literature. Henry James, Hawthorne, Edith Wharton, D.H. Lawrence and William Faulkner had contributed to it. Poe had devoted his entire career to it. Famously, Edmund Wilson had dismissed horror, but lots of writers Wilson cherished had not. It had a history and a stature ignored by most readers, and I thought there was room in there for me. The agent's words gave me a way out of my dilemma. If I could write a good book with a supernatural theme, I would be able to get myself out of my psychic hole, earn some money, follow my own interests and do something worth doing, all at the same time. I spent a month or two inventing a situation and a set of characters, and then began writing the book eventually called *Julia*.

Immediately, and I do mean immediately, in the course of writing the first sentence, I felt resolved, creatively and imaginatively at home. I knew it would work because I knew I was writing as well as I could. The next time my wife brought up the job at the local bookstore, I told her to hang on and be patient, that everything was going to be all right.

Brutarian: Mystery writers or romance writers are seldom asked "Why do you write this stuff?", whereas with horror writers it is almost always the first question that springs to mind. Would you care to try and define for us the appeal that horror has on you?

Straub: Some people do screw up their courage and ask why, given all the alternatives, anyone would choose to write horror, the implication being that no one in his right mind with the proper outlook on life would go near the stuff. Many others simply assume you've got a screw loose. It never seems to occur to these people that writers generally produce books of the sort they themselves like to read, nor, more crucially, that writers of fiction don't actually have a great deal of choice as to style and subject matter. Novelists of any merit pretty much do the one or two things they *can* do. Their gifts have a particular coloration, size, or direction.

I once heard the late English TV playwright Dennis Potter say that everyone thought artists should cover the entire alphabet from A to Z, but as far as he was concerned, the artist sat down and typed A, A, A, A, A, over and over again. But you are really asking about the appeal of horror in general, and I want to offer two separate

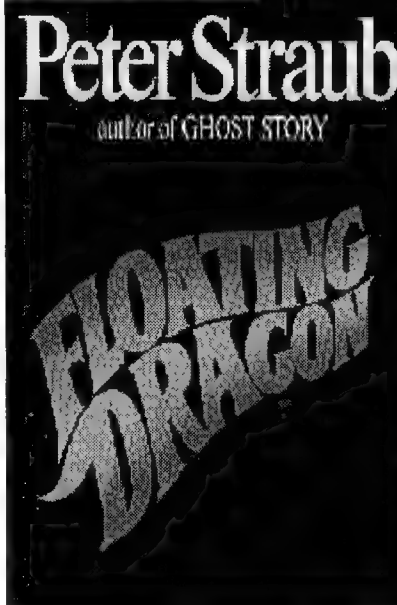
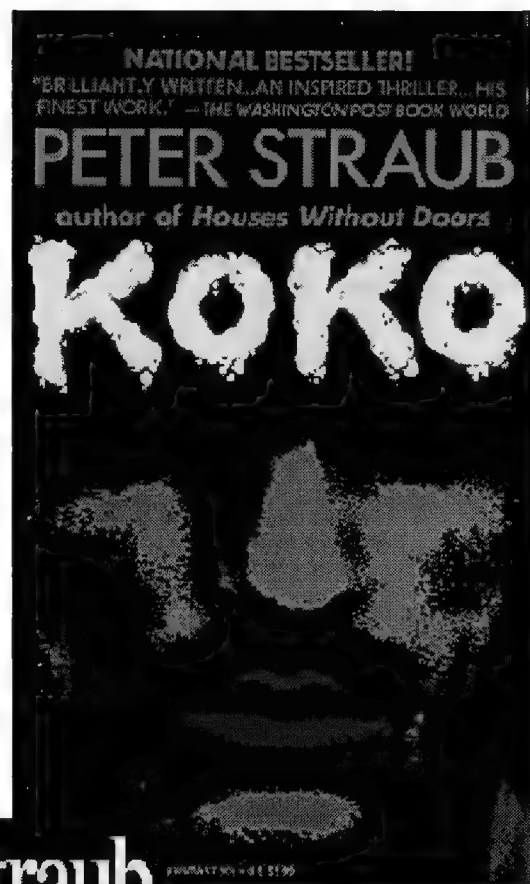
thoughts. The first is that while certain kinds of literature address and satisfy particular needs of the reading public (as, for example, mysteries and the novels of Anthony Trollope were popular in Britain during World War II because they spoke of a well-ordered world), the acceptance on a large scale of any genre - I include the genre of the mainstream novel - depends on the quality of the writers in that genre at the time.

Mysteries are experiencing a resurgence of popularity because a number of excellent mystery writers, among them David Lee Burke, Jonathan Kellerman, Lawrence Sanders and Robert B. Parker, reliably produced consistently good work over the past two decades.

There can be no doubt that Stephen King all but single handedly recreated horror as a successful genre, and he did it by writing novels that were exciting, accessible, peopled with three dimensional characters and far more ambitious than almost anything that had come along before. And he wrote them at a indefatigable clip. Of course, *Rosemary's Baby*, a wonderfully crafted novel, had

helped prepare the ground, as had *The Other*, *Harvest Home* and *The Exorcist*. King's publishers at the time, Doubleday and NAL, supported him to the hilt by putting out his books in vast numbers. Which is to say that they, especially NAL, King's paperback publisher, kept the pipeline filled, which was good business but does not always happen. These books were published as mainstream mass market paperbacks, not category books. The second of King's paperbacks, *Salem's Lot*, did not even display his name on the cover! But although King's novels were not marketed as horror, horror was what they were, and their overwhelming success immediately brought a shift in received thinking. "There is a big audience for horror out there", thought every publishing executive in New York, "what do you know, I better jump on the ship before it leaves the dock and sign up at least one new horror writer".

For a time, a good number of horror writers, especially those who seemed be influ-

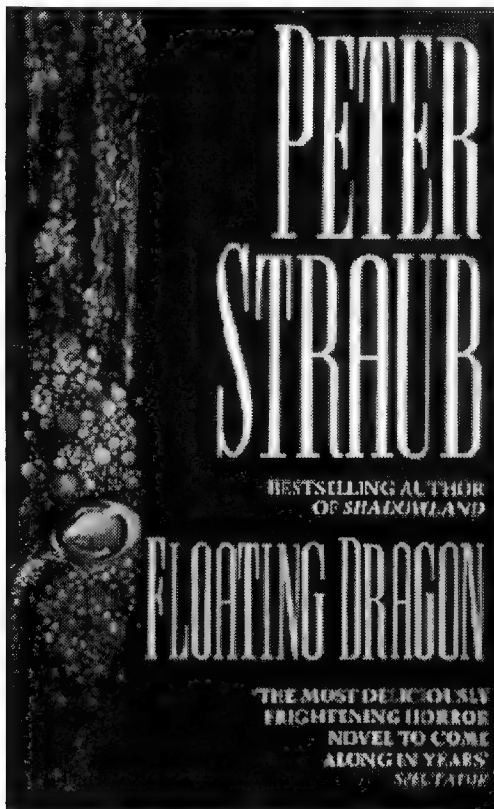


enced by King, writers like Marlyns Millhauser, Frank de Fellita, Bari Woods, Frank Herbert, Graham Masterton and myself, found themselves in the happy position of being the pampered darlings of the publishing industry. Ramsey Campbell, who had been writing and publishing excellent short stories for years, undoubtedly had no trouble at all selling his first forays into the novel form to Macmillan. All of these books were published and marketed as mainstream novels, like the thrillers by Ken Follett or Robert Ludlum. Some of the writers endured and others did not, but the crucial matter is that King's example had opened the

way to a wider audience for a few worthy authors. So half of my answer to the question of why horror suddenly became appealing during the mid-Seventies and held its appeal throughout the Eighties and into the early Nineties is that some of the work being done at that time was so good that it demanded attention.

The sequel to this story, involving opportunistic publishers and writers alike, the inflation of horror lines filled out with formulaic dimwits, the proliferation of numberless so called "horror writers" who had far too much in common with the writers of series mystery novels numbly, affectlessly imitating Raymond Chandler, or, with even sillier

results, Dorothy Sayers, is too grim to recount. But you are primarily asking me to speculate about why horror should maintain its appeal over even those times when it does not speak to a mass audience. Why does it exist at all? Of course, this is a much more interesting subject.



Brutarian: I believe it was Stephen King who once said: "We make up horrors to help us cope with the real ones." Would you agree?

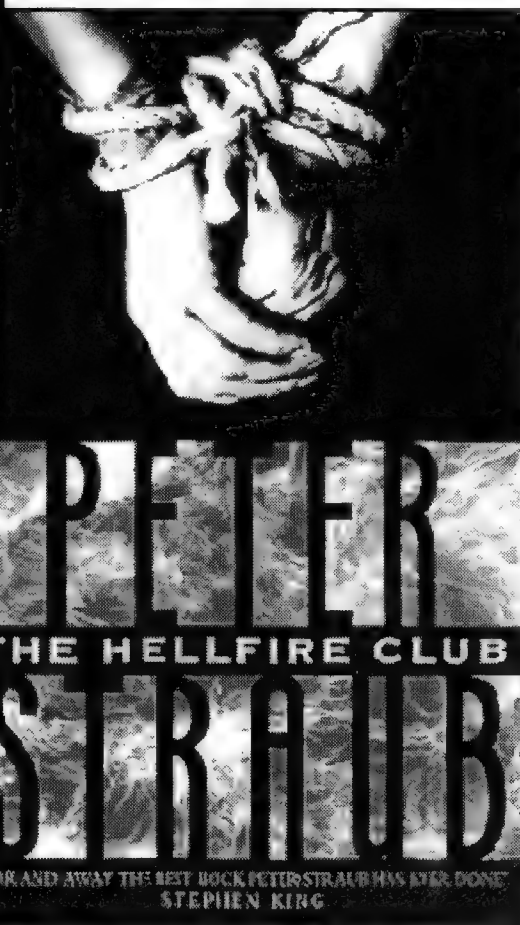
Straub: He's right, they do exactly that. Some horror fiction simplifies and reduces, shrinking great questions and issues into cartoonish battles between good and evil, which renders them easily manageable. Other novels focus on the details of violent actions, which does the same thing. But great questions and issues are always at stake, and more thoughtful and nuanced work examines them, gives them a greater degree of expression. The fear of death and fascination with death, the sense that much of the world is unknown and out of reach, the apprehension of the mysterious, the knowledge of the vulnerability of every human condition to abrupt, unwelcome catastrophe, the ambiguities of the self, the enormous facts of grief and loss, all of these concerns are central to horror, widely considered. No other kind of literature focuses on the essential fragility of human life, its openness to ultimate meanings and transformations. Good horror writing provides a means by which imagination, our greatest human capacity, can engage with

these concerns.

Brutarian: Apart from the obvious financial benefits, what else is there for you in writing? Is it a means to "exorcise your inner demons"?

Straub: I know that writing is the only real way for me to create coherence and stability in my life. The process of writing does not so much exorcise the demons within, those gleeful little savages, as to bring them into the light and let me see their faces. It is about discovery and recognition as well as invention, about the establishment of a kind of control over forces that prefer to remain hidden.

One of its nicest aspects is that it has a great resemblance to play, in fact it is a enlightened form of play. I can be nothing but grateful for having been given the capacity to play this particular game in this particular way. Musicians, especially good jazz musicians and classical soloists, must feel the same way. You have this odd, individual aperture, and through it you can focus everything you think and feel, even those things you had not quite apprehended, into expression.



Brutarian: I am curious about the writing process that you follow. Do you just get a skeleton plan of the story down on paper and improvise as you go along or do you prefer to let the story mature in your mind for a few months and reach a point where it needs to

tell itself? Do you think that a thorough pre-plotting works in favor of the novel eventually? Looking back, where do you think your best ideas came from?

Straub: Because I have learned to respect and value the vagaries of what is known as "the process," my method tends toward a kind of recklessness. Early on, that is, with my third book, I wanted the comfort of an outline, so that I would more or less know where I was going before I got there. However, I found that a great many crucial details and connections floated up unplanned, and that most of them demanded changes in what I had outlined. Very often, something I had inserted in the first sections of a book simply because it had suggested itself turned out to be essential and explanatory later. After the power of the unconscious, or whatever that was, had demonstrated itself half a dozen times, I began to trust it, to rely upon it, often with the feeling that the book itself knew what it wanted to be, and my job was to get out of its way and let it come into something as close to its ideal form as I could.

For the past ten or fifteen years, I have been trying to work out a compromise between caution and blind faith. For a couple of months, I think about the basic situation of the new book, its characters and movement. I fill notebooks with scraps and details, some useful, some merely misguided guesses. When this material feels internalized and I have begun to imagine that I am engaged with the characters and what happens to them, I begin writing. Before long, usually after another month or two, something previously unnoticed or completely unexpected pops up, suggesting that, no matter what I had in mind, the story wishes to take a left-hand turn. I almost always follow these internal recommendations, although from time to time they cause me both anxiety and grief, anxiety because I understand that I am in danger of soon becoming lost, grief because the story's internal voice has whispered that one or more characters of whom I was all too fond were about to be thrown overboard. I know which one of us is in charge, so I jettison the beloveds.

After the passing of another month, my worries have turned into fact and I am lost, utterly, I am in the midst of a trackless forest without map or compass. At that point, I have no choice but to keep on writing. This is the true meaning of what is called "process," to keep inching forward day by day in total darkness, trusting that one or another step taken in the past eventually will illuminate the way out. You are on a journey, that's why you left home in the first place, in order to entrust yourself to these rigors so that you can draw your map as you go along. After all, it's your

map, not anyone else's. A year passes. Every day feels like chipping away at a coal-face, like climbing a granite mountain that would prefer, on the whole, to be left alone. Just when you think that it cannot possibly work and the book was an error to begin with, that you will never get out of the woods or see daylight again, a nice broad path opens up before you, the path opens out into an actual road, and for the next three or four months you zoom along toward your destination, usually some place of whose very existence you had been entirely ignorant.

All of this can be and usually is, to use a word from horror's dramatic vocabulary, "harrowing," but it does lead to discovery. It gives the book a chance to breathe, to come into life in accord with its own deepest impulses. Working this way, I am less likely to impose on it my own mistakes and limitations.

And, since you are unafraid to ask about the source of ideas, an enigma to one and all, I should respond as honestly as possible and say that what I imagined were my best ideas always came from submitting myself to the narrative journey I just described - they appeared when the novel and I had finally entered into a deep, mutual discourse. I know that sounds pretentious, and it understates the degree to which I am plotting and controlling the narrative flow even when most adrift, but it also feels like the truth.

Brutarian: Judging by your work, I'd say that you prefer a subtle approach to the horror element in your novels. Do you agree with Graham Masterton on his view that: "...the more overt horror is, the quicker the fear factor drops"? What's the most frightening kind of horror in your opinion?

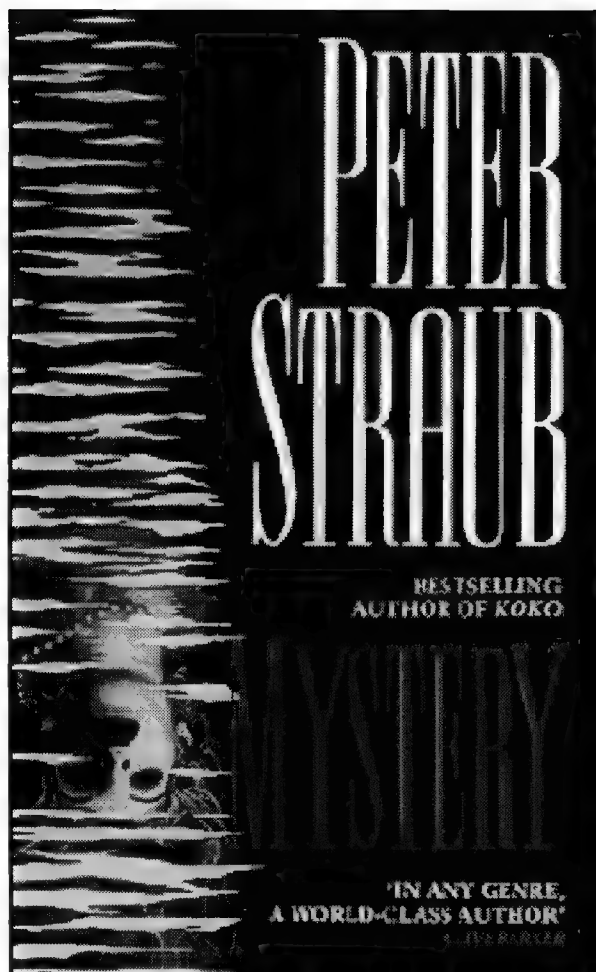
Straub: Graham Masterton's belief that in horror fiction fear has an inverse relationship to the overt or explicit falls apart when applied to *Salem's Lot*, *The Shining* and probably *Ghost Story*, too. (And I should mention *Floating Dragon*, a book in which overt excess was the primary esthetic principle. A friend who was reading the typescript asked me, "Do you think there's such a thing as being too scary?" I replied as one would expect.) Different kinds of stories demand

different kinds of tones, approaches, strategems. I suspect that what Graham had in mind were the ham-fisted, poorly executed, imitative horror novels which poured from publishing houses at the end of the Eighties, usually as elements of a category horror paperback imprint and adorned with jackets depicting broken dolls, severed heads, and the like. These wretched books invariably resorted to violence and gore in desperate measure. Finally, this kind of thing becomes comic.

Even done well, extreme violence and carnage soon becomes repetitious. The reader gets numbed. But imagine the results produced by a third-rate writer who idealized Ramsey. You'd wind up with a sordid atmosphere, gloomy, ineffectual characters, and frequent glimpses of creeping mould. Depression, not fear, would be in the offing. I like both approaches, the quiet and the extravagant, as long as they are written well, although extravagant, over-the-top, wild-eyed stories have to be really well written to work at all, and very few people have pulled it off. David Schow, Poppy Z.

Brite and Joe Lansdale can do it, but I can't think of anyone else.

Brutarian: A lot of your novels deal with buried secrets and the impact their resurfacing has on the novel's characters. Why are secrets so important to you as plot devices?
Straub: A lot, in fact almost all, of my books turn on the eruption of one or more long-buried secrets which have been beating away, out of sight but powerfully consequential, throughout the narrative. I guess my mind just works that way. It is less the fact of the secret that interests me than its concealment. When an important, decisive fact is hidden, tensions and mysteries cloud the air. Some characters founder in illusion, others in an inexpressable guilt. The reader comes to feel an urgency he or she cannot pin down, but which increases as the protagonist gets

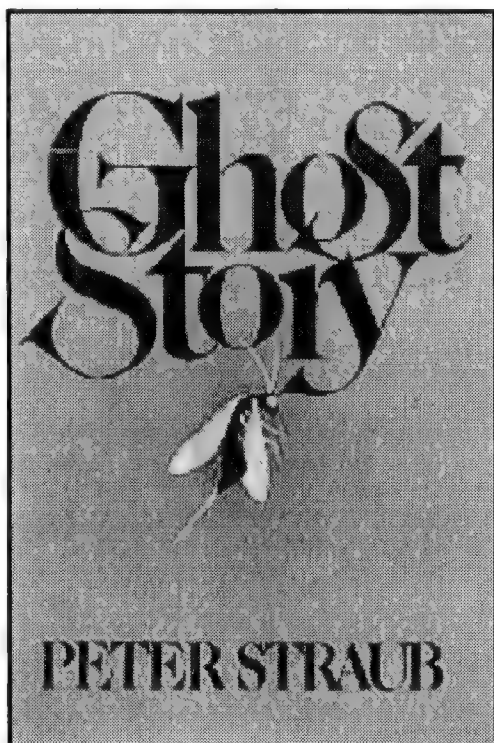


nearer to the hidden wound. These effects compound themselves when the protagonist is implicated in the hidden wound.

I suppose what attracts me to this situation is that most people, however educated or intelligent, have only the dimmest comprehension of their own motives. We can often identify what is suppressed or unacknowledged in other people while being cheerfully blind to our psychic mechanisms. The recognition of one's own self-delusions and evasions invariably brings with it a sense of reconciliation, a kind of healing. Suddenly, explanations - the reasons why one did a shameful thing, why one always reacts to a particular set of circumstances in an ineffective or unwise way - move into the light, and once can make sense of what had been inchoate. For me, at least, narratives that embody this process carry a kind of emotional depth.

Brutarian: Since some of your books deal with the element of the supernatural (*Ghost Story*, *Floating Dragon*, *Shadowland*, etc), I was wondering if you have ever had an experience that could genuinely be termed supernatural. Also, do you think that writing these books for so many years has made you more open or even more receptive to the supernatural?

Straub: I don't mean to sound as though I am dodging this question, but I'm not sure



what kind of experience is genuinely supernatural. I have never seen a ghost or encountered a demon. I do not believe in demons, although they can be entertaining in fiction, and I reserve judgment about ghosts. However, I do believe that there is more to the world than what we perceive of it.

Brutarian: Are you of the opinion that what is generally termed "supernatural" is just a part of nature we have not discovered or comprehended yet?

Straub: I guess I think that is a good way to put it. Having written novels for the past twentyfive years has not had any effect on my attitude toward the supernatural. When I used it in my work, the supernatural was only a device, a way of setting the characters in motion.

Brutarian: Around the middle of your writing career, you moved from the supernatural horror of *Floating Dragon* and *Ghost Story* to the realistic horror of *KOKO*. Looking back, was this a conscious decision? Do you think that realistic horror is more effective than supernatural horror (maybe in the sense that it is easier to achieve suspension of disbelief in the former than in the latter)?

Straub: After *Floating Dragon*, I felt that I had just about done everything I could with supernatural materials, at least for a time. Moving closer to the world inhabited by human beings in *KOKO* was very much a

conscious decision. Behind the decision lay a kind of growing self-awareness which, as self-awareness always does, helped make a greater sense of the world in general. Once I thought I had begun to have a deeper understanding of why people behaved as they did, supernatural causes and effects - the traditional imagery of horror - seemed trivial in comparison.

I was still interested in all the same things, but concentrating on the depths of contradiction, denial, repression, self-delusion in the characters, I thought, made the evocations of fear, despair, terror, madness far more emotionally resonant. Everything seemed to take on greater weight and meaning. The real world had no shortage of horrors, after all, and demonstrating their origins in various baffled or stunted aspects of the human character seemed both interesting and worthwhile.

But effectiveness, like everything else, is a direct product of the conviction and accuracy of the writing itself. Fifty paint-by-numbers novels about serial killers count for less than one story by Poe.

Brutarian: In *The Hellfire Club* I had the feeling at times that you relished creating/writing such a devilishly evil character as Dick Dart. As regards his ideology, is it 100% different to yours or is there some common ground between the two of you? Do you find it dis-

turbing that often the real life counterparts of Dick Dart seem in many ways to be more in touch with reality or with the truth than, say, certain politicians or media personalities?

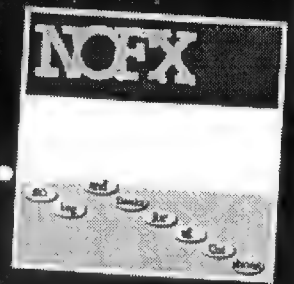
Straub: Dick Dart was sheer pleasure to write, and he kept me ever amused. I never had any idea what he was going to say. He just seemed to grab the pen and write his own dialogue. Sometimes, I observed, his high octane rants exaggerated and almost parodied things I had heard uttered by friends of mine; at other times, what he expressed amounted to conventional wisdom transformed by absolute cynicism. His ideology, such

as it is, contradicts my own at every point. Dart's essential viewpoint, if you subtract the insanity, honors money, rapacity, greed, desire, force and control. Mine does not. Dart is a comic distortion of far-right attitudes, assumptions and traits, and I'm just another wishy washy liberal.

On the other hand, these friends of mine who provided the basis for some of Dart's ideas about life often do seem to have a certain handle on things that less informed, more idealistic people do not. The real world tends to be a harsh, gritty place, filled with sanctimonious nonsense and platitudes Dick Dart would see through in a second. He understands that a politician who spouts heartfelt cliches about patriotism, family val-

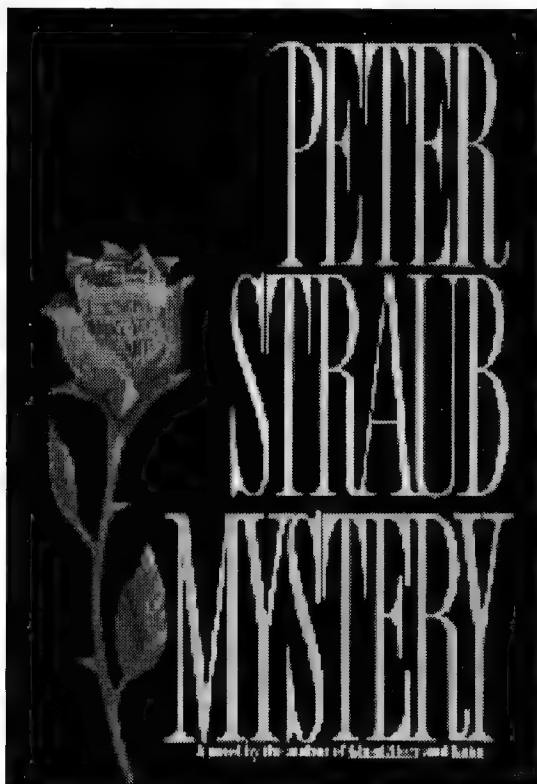


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ues and the benefits of religious conviction is probably stuffing his pocket with illicit contributions and kick backs. Where Dart veers off the track is that he applauds the crimes and cherishes the duplicity.



Brutarian: What sort of research did you have to do to write the character of Dick Dart? You mentioned that some friends provided you with the basis for Dart. In what sense was that?

Straub: The birth of Dick Dart occurred in the normal manner, that is, by spontaneous generation. No research, as the term is generally understood, was necessary. It rarely is. I am not fond of research, though I will do it if held at gunpoint. The friends I mentioned did not provide the basis for Dart's character. Who would choose friends like that? Would you want to spend time with a completely amoral, self-aggrandizing alcoholic with a sneering contempt for the rest of the human race? I suspect that such people are a great deal more enjoyable to read about than to have hanging about the house, soaking up all your liquor and insulting your taste in furniture. Two men I know now and then deliver themselves of lengthy observations on the nature of the female psyche. To them, it is transparently clear that women are one and all cunning predators with an instinctive, historical desire to exploit, manipulate and befuddle their opposite numbers, on whom they depend for large houses, vast wardrobes, gems from Tiffany's and expert sexual services, all of which they need constantly and in ever-increasing quantities. These men spend a great of their time in the company of women, although of the items listed above

they supply only the last. In every other way, they are charming, intelligent fellows, but they also misogynists. I had known both of them for a good time before I heard their views about women, and these views rather

startled me. "Oh", I said to myself, "there still really are guys who think that way". Some of Dart's comments exaggerate things I have heard them say, but neither of these men would be any more likely to befriend him than I would.

Brutarian: I was reading your biographical note while visiting your web site and there is a bit that mentions you and Thom Tessier discussed HP Lovecraft quite often. What do you think of HP Lovecraft as a writer? Where would you attribute his enormous and long lasting influence on many contemporary horror writers? Also, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think I detect a Lovecraftian influence in *Floating Dragon*.

Straub: I'm very much of two minds about H.P. Lovecraft. Once he got out from under the shadow of Lord Dunsany, he single-handedly invented a new approach to horror, complete with a cosmology to support it. His best stories create an atmosphere of steadily intensifying dread, and do so with great authority. They begin with a protagonist who becomes aware of disorder and helplessly seeks to investigate it. He penetrates gloomy, secretive buildings and dire landscapes. The closer he gets to the source of the disorder, the darker and less knowable the world becomes. In the end, either he, or his best friend, is undone. All the effects are original to Lovecraft, and they have a sort of creeping power.

My objections mainly have to do with the language, which can be labored and overwrought. All those italics, all those repeated adjectives curdle into self-parody. On the whole, however, I am very fond of Lovecraft, and I respect his achievement enormously. He came into a distinct, unique point of view to which his technique was perfectly adapted, and which he used to powerful effect. Anyone capable of this kind of harmony is going to attract admiring readers and devoted imitators. I would not count myself among the latter, but if you see a Lovecraft influence in *Floating Dragon*, it may well be there.

Brutarian: In my opinion, *Floating Dragon* had that atmosphere of timeless, cosmic evil that one so often encounters in Lovecraft's work. Have you ever thought of writing a purely Mythos story?

Straub: I've never considered adding to the number of pseudo Chthulu Mythos stories which began, I guess with August Derleth's efforts. Apart from the stories by people who actually knew Lovecraft, these always seemed to me more like fannish gestures than interesting fiction. But I should add that the book I'm working on now, currently

called *Mr. X*, makes frequent reference to Lovecraft, whose stories a principle character takes not only to be literal fact, but directly applicable to his own situation. He wishes the Great Old Ones to get what they have hungered for all these years, and he intends to help them do it.

Brutarian: What's more important for you when writing a book, to elaborately render the physical violence or to focus on the psychological impact these horrific situations have on the book's characters? What do you see as the most essential element of a good horror story?

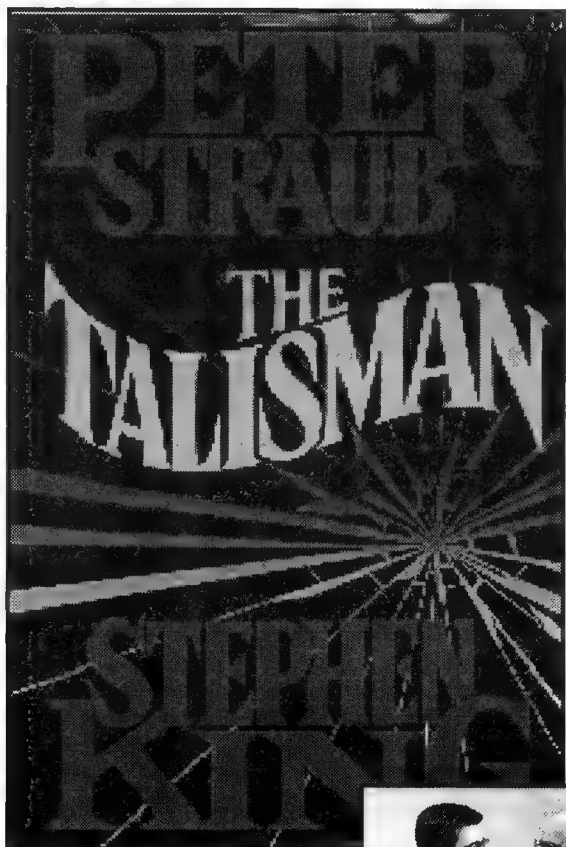
Straub: I want to consider your second question first. For me, essential elements of good horror fiction include vibrant characterization (which demands dialogue that sounds like dialogue), well rendered settings, a sense of pace and timing, a gathering sense of tension, prose that is at least serviceable, imaginative conviction and a kind of passion. One should feel that the author had to write this particular way and no other. A detailed rendering of physical violence is worthless without a full recognition of the many sorts of impact such events have on their participants and witnesses.

Shock, grief, panic, emotional blunting, pervasive fear and insecurity, lingering anxiety, a fresh, raw sense of fragility, all these and a lot more unhappy states result from exposure to trauma. If you do not acknowledge them in some degree, you're writing stories for sociopaths and resentful adolescents who know they're angry at something but can't figure out what it is, exactly.

Brutarian: Most horror writers give their stories a happy ending. Do you think this is a market dictated decision (in the sense that readers expect a catharsis)?

Straub: Well, many Lovecraft stories end less than happily, at least for the human characters. And Poe did not write many Valentine cards: *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Tell Tale Heart* scarcely move toward reconciliation and satisfaction. Neither do most of Robert Bloch's or Richard Matheson's stories. I know what you mean, though. Almost all contemporary, Stephen King inspired horror novels end with evil routed and benign human order restored through the exercise of courage, loyalty, sacrifice and love. Dean Koontz has yet to kill off one of his plucky heroes or heroines, and I don't imagine he ever will. If your narrative concerns a struggle between good and evil, the point of the exercise is that good is going to triumph. King himself is too honest to be formulaic, as witness *Cujo* and *Pet Sematary*, in which central children come to horrible ends. Famously, horror is inherently conservative, a notion which I think must be based in the restoration of moral order at the end of most long horror fiction.

This restoration makes readers feel good.



It satisfies their expectations, confirms their prejudices, reinforces their conception of dramatic narrative shape, offers hope, encourages and rewards their identification with the protagonist and smoothly returns them to solid ground down glowing with accomplishment. A lot of literature works toward precisely these goals, and if a writer can achieve them, he is going to sell a great number of books.

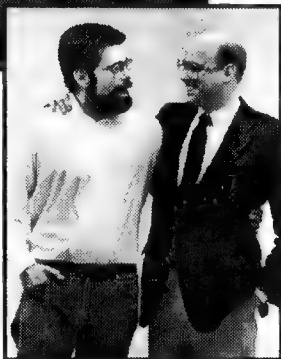
Yet the terms "horror" and "happy ending" seem almost self-contradictory, oxymoronic. While I cherish several books that work in the way I just described, I also like fiction that does not eternalize or objectify evil, that recognizes its place in human life and conduct and resists, even denies, the notion that moral judgments are an easy matter. Imaginatively understood, evil can evoke sympathy.

Darkness, too, carries a moral weight. I'm thinking of writers like Robert Aickman, Hawthorne, Shirley Jackson, Joyce Carol Oates. I might as well throw in Henry James, Dostoyevski and Kafka.

Brutarian: You mentioned that horror is famously conservative. I guess that the horror formula that demands a cathartic end and a restoration of moral order is one of the conservative elements of the genre. Are there more? I've spoken to two writers who are just marginally in the genre, Graham Joyce and Jonathan Carroll, and they both suggested

that horror owes a great deal of its conservative traits to the writers themselves. Joyce even went on to suggest that, deep down, a lot of horror writers are puritans themselves, hence their revulsion about the physical body, the lack of any realistic and honest sexual scenes in most contemporary horror titles, the need for a cathartic ending, etc. Would you agree with that point?

Straub: Instinctively, I would guess that both Graham Joyce and Jonathan Carroll are on to something in supposing that what could be seen as the "conservative" cast of traditional horror derives from the personalities and limitations of its creators. An odd, unhappy, puritanical streak does run through many of these writers, particularly Lovecraft. Howard Lovecraft appears to have been happiest when celibate, and even his most devoted and informed devotee, the formidable S.T. Joshi, finds himself unable to suppress his amusement at his subject's haplessness



during confrontations with the opposite sex. An unconscious revulsion and terror before the spectacle of the human body, especially, since all of these writers are men, the female body, might be seen as a considerable personal drawback, even a kind of neurotic disability, but such afflictions can be fruitful for all kinds of artists. An instinctive terror, whatever its causes, inevitably provides material for imaginative expression. Any deeply felt emotion is artistic ground zero, so to speak, and emotions wrapped in and charged with mystery and power virtually call out for imaginative elaboration.

Judgements of conventional kinds are useless, silly, misplaced in cases where the imaginative expression and development of personal issues achieve an authoritative, convincing effect. This imaginative development into effective expression, which represents an exploration, lies at the center of the artistic impulse. In their personal lives, Kafka, Tolstoy, Dostoyevski, Henry James, Virginia Woolf and Raymond Chandler, along with hundreds of other worthy novelists, suffered from a tremendous variety of disorders ranging from misogyny, crippling insecurity, alcoholism and sexual disfunction to outright mania.

Because they had the good luck to have been born writers, their problems amounted to a kind of gift. They, and others like them, were so organized as to possess both the need and ability to envelop those problems within the ongoing, provisional, exploratory

play fiction makes available. All I'm saying is that description does not equal criticism.

Yet this issue of "conservatism" bothers me. What makes a so-called "puritanical," or more properly, a neurotic, revulsion from sex and the physical facts of the human body conservative? It seems like inaccurate shorthand. Even the moral threads in conservative thought in no way imply or reference sexual terror. Mankind is seen as flawed, error-prone, imperfectible. Life is a jungle inhabited by beasts. The political consequence involves control, manipulation, the encouragement of those who achieve, the abandonment to their fates of those who succumb to humankind's inherent fallibility. The sort of ameliorative, sunshiny, emotionally cathartic conclusions to be found in some horror fictions seems to me antithetical to the general conservative position. I guess we are talking about social, instead of moral or political, conservatism, and a debased, thoughtless parody of the real thing.

Brutarian: Name some new horror writers you like.

Straub: The truth is that apart from tried-and-true favorites, I read very little horror these days, so I'm working on a fairly small data base here. There probably are at least two or three younger writers I'd find interesting besides these three, Poppy Z. Brite, David J. Schow, Caitlin Kiernan. I met, liked, in different ways was intrigued, charmed and delighted by all three before I read their work, so I can't pretend that my personal affection has not influenced my regard for their fiction, but both the personal affection and the professional respect are genuine.

Poppy Z. Brite writes as though her life depended on it. That a playful spirit informs the transgressions only ups the ante. Only Poppy Brite could have written *Exquisite Corpse*. Two serial killers meet, recognize one another, fall in love, so to speak, engage in enthusiastic same-sex sex, then bow to their innermost demands, the survivor afterward munching sacramentally on the carefully preserved gobbets of his beloved. All of this comes wrapped in well-measured, observant, imaginative prose.

Schow once described a character's skin tone as "somewhere between catgut and bottled pig's knuckle," which suggests the pungency, immediacy and slightly rancorous humor of his work. Schow has the energy, wit, skill and passion to create a really memorable body of work.

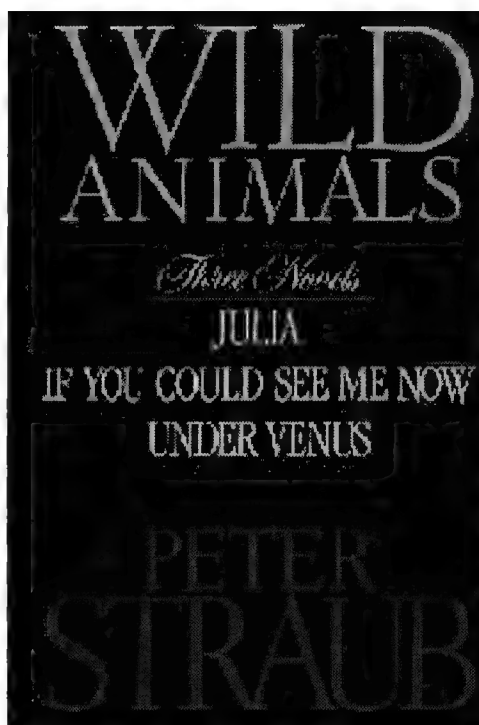
I have less to say about Caitlin Kiernan only because I've read less of her work than I have of the other two, but I was enormously impressed by her first novel, *Silk*. I am sent lots of galleys and manuscripts, and *Silk* was clearly superior to about ninety-five per cent of them. She writes with absolute assurance and the sort of suggestiveness and control most horror writers don't even know enough to envy. A voice like that is a pure gift.

Brutarian: Do you like meeting your readers? Do you like to attend conventions?

Straub: Meeting people who have read and enjoyed my work is always a profound pleasure. I am nothing but grateful for their appreciation, and I'll sign anything they put in front of me, as long as it wasn't written by somebody else. I used to go to conventions more often than I do now. I always enjoyed them, but the intensity of the encounters and the inevitable late hours usually meant that I needed about two days to recover. For the past five or six years, I've gone to conventions if I was nominated for an award or was a Guest of Honor, conditions which tend to keep me from excessive socializing in strange hotels. When I do turn up at conventions, though, I almost always have a good time. They provide the only occasions where I can get together with writer friends who live a great distance from New York.

Brutarian: For you, what are the dangers of being such a successful writer?

Straub: Being a writer creates so many dangers by itself that those of success dwindle by comparison. Writers like me more or less invent themselves daily. Every new book is like hatching out of the egg all over again, and the lengthy task of figuring out how to walk, after that how to fly, demands most of one's concentration. I don't have the time to sit around luxuriating in the afterglow of earlier praise. On the whole, the relatively unremarkable degree of success I have enjoyed has aided me. When I feel lost or depressed, I can remember that I have known the same hopelessness many times before and that the book in progress invariably pulled itself together. Apart from that, my level of suc-



cess chiefly means that I don't have to pay attention to the prices listed in menus. If I ever got rich enough to buy islands and fly in private jets, I suppose I might get lazy and corrupt, but probably I'd stay the same basket case I am now, only fatter.

Brutarian: How difficult is it being a successful writer, and one that writes 600+page books at that, and having a family?

Straub: Nobody sensible should enlist in the family of any writer, much less one who churns out absurdly long books. The difficulty is not in my side, but on theirs.

Brutarian: Your web site also mentions that you were involved in a serious car accident while you were in the first grade. Do you have any recollection of your near death experience? How long were you "dead" for?

Straub: Oh, dear. This. I've written about my collision with a moving automobile twice, at some length, in *Mystery* and *The Throat*. I did it twice because I knew I had not done it justice the first time, that more juice could be squeezed out of the experience. I have to say, it really was an experience, one that turned out to be transforming, traumatic and determinative, but also tremendously illuminating and generously available to imaginative exploration. As any combat veteran, survivor of a massive earthquake, victim of childhood rape, or any of my brothers and sisters in catastrophic trauma can tell you, these things stay with you, and that's that. They move in. The more you ignore them, the more fun they have. You might as well figure out how to live with them.

My memories of what I must

assume was death, and here I wish to interject a stern reminder that I have no interest at all in becoming a spokesman for the near death experience, none, I am about other things altogether, and besides that, the people who take up public space by maundering on and on about the afterlife always make me feel sick. My memories of this gripping period, as I was saying, are brief and imagistic. I certainly recall seeing the radiator of the vehicle in question advancing toward me frame by frame, as in a series of still photographs. There followed a sense of release and journeying toward an unknown but blissful goal. Both absolute ecstasy and absolute terror were present. Anything like selfhood, personality, character had been left behind, shucked off, hence the ecstasy and the terror. The ecstasy itself was terrifying. Before the unimagineable consumation, or whatever it might have been, before all contact with one's damaged self was irretrievably lost, the annihilating light which beckoned the remaining, consciousness-drenched particle disappeared, something like that, and after a merciful interval the human world reappeared, not in the happiest of guises.

I have no idea how long this adventure might have lasted. Seconds, probably. Certainly, no more than a minute. Since it was far too much for a seven year old boy to handle, I promptly wrapped the whole thing in chains and threw it overboard. And there it bubbled and stirred, for forty years sending up nightmarish material and hints of radiance, until one day a relaxed, distracted mind and a chance word let it seize the opportunity to charge up to the surface. I thought I was going to die all over again, I clamped down fast in total terror, and soon afterward I wished that I'd had the courage to endure it a little longer. But at least I had recaptured a crucial portion.

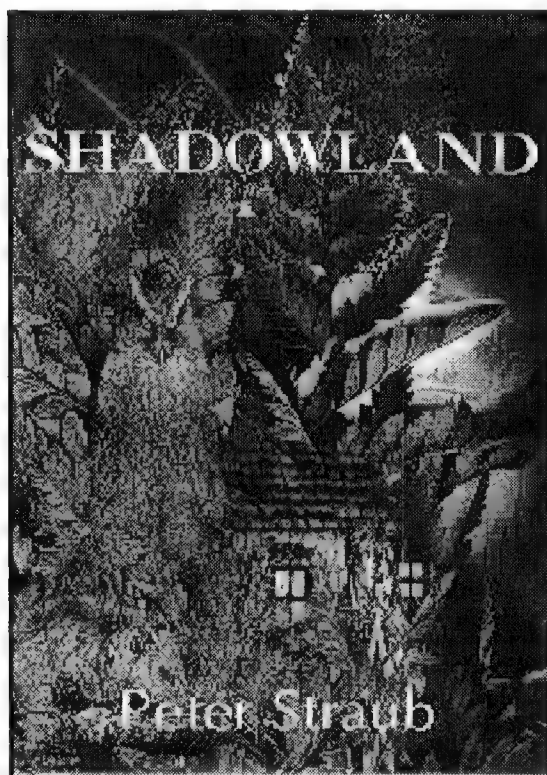
Brutarian: What are you working on now?

Straub: As I said before, I am working on a book presently called *Mr. X*. It began as a pleasant, undemanding tale about a Doppelganger, a theme I've tried unsuccessfully to smuggle into several earlier books. Almost as soon as I started writing, it informed me that it had no intention of being either pleasant or undemanding, but at least it is still about a Doppelganger.

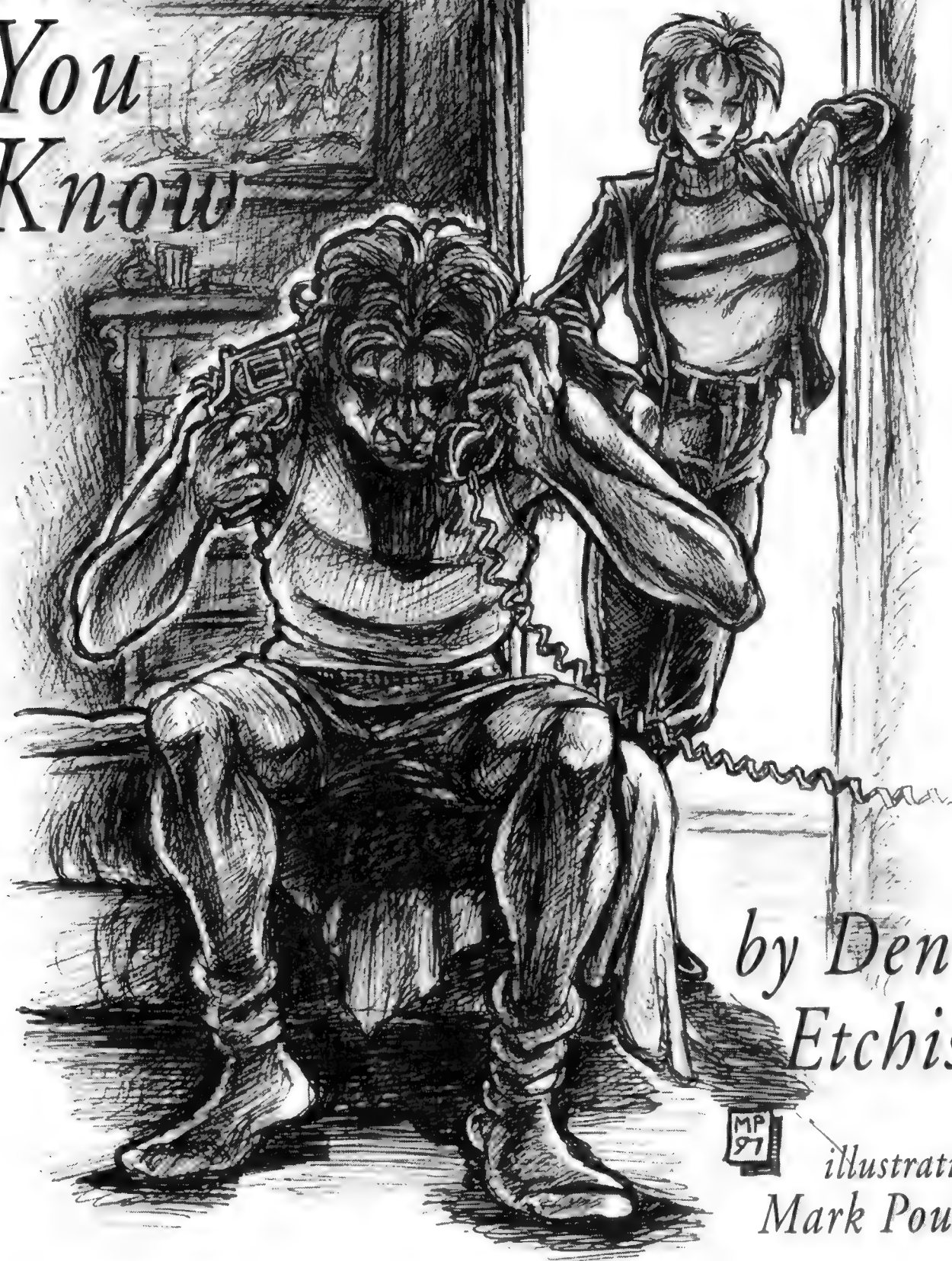
Brutarian: When do you think it will be out?

Straub: With luck, *Mr. X* will come out in the autumn of 1998. Or maybe in the spring of 1999. But before that can happen, I have to write the last 400 pages in the next four months. It is just barely possible that I might crawl across the finish line in time to meet the deadline. ■

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No One You Know



*by Dennis
Etchison*



*illustration by
Mark Poutenis*

This time the phone rang for ten minutes before she picked it up.

"Michael, stop. Or I'll call the police."

"We need to talk," he said.

She put the book down on the bed, took off her glasses and rubbed her eyes so hard that they made little squeaking sounds in their sockets.

"There's nothing to talk about."

"It wasn't what you think..."

"What was it, a mercy fuck?"

"I'm not going to lie to you. I made a mistake—once, that's all. It didn't mean anything..."

"I'm sure it didn't to her. What's thirty seconds, one way or the other?"

"You don't have to be nasty about it."

The young woman sighed, blowing air into the mouthpiece. She took the last of her Virginia Slims from a crumpled pack and searched the night table for a match.

"Oh, I get it," she said, "it's my fault now. You didn't do anything. You weren't even there, right?"

"One mistake and you're cutting me off. Just like that. I thought we had something..."

"Maybe we did, but it's over."

The cigarette hung from her lips at an odd angle. When she lit it nothing happened. There was a break in the middle and a thin stream of blue smoke wafted up and into her eyes before reaching her mouth. She dropped the match into a full ashtray but kept the cigarette clamped so tightly between her teeth that the filter deformed into a flattened oval.

"Listen..." he said.

"You just don't get it, do you? What is there about this that you can't understand? Finis. Do you hear what I'm saying?"

"Do you hear this?"

On the other end of the line, there was a click.

She sighed again.

"It's one o'clock in the morning.

Good night, Michael."

"Or this?" he said.

Then there was a second click, closer and sharper. It sounded like he had struck the mouthpiece with a pencil.

"What about it?" she said.

"That makes two out of six."

She opened her eyes and stared across the bedroom, trying to focus. The cigarette fell from her lips and onto the front of her nightgown. When she picked it up the teeth marks in the filter were so deep that it was bitten almost completely through, but she did not notice.

"Look, whatever your game is, I don't want to play, all right? I have to go to work in six hours..."

"This isn't a game," he said. "It's a matter of odds."

"What is?"

"I'm betting that you won't throw it all away."

"Don't be stupid."

"Then come over."

"What for?"

"We'll talk it out."

"I told you, no!"

"One more and it's fifty-fifty."

There was something different about his voice now. The tone was no longer smooth and conciliatory. It was not even desperate. It was mocking.

She sat up straight.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm a gambler, Jeannie. Are you?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I always liked roulette. Here goes..."

"Wait."

"I could come over there."

"Do that and I call the police."

"Then listen up."

"Why?"

"I want you to hear it. So you'll never forget."

There was a third click in her ear, as loud as a piece of metal snapping. It must have been right next to his mouth.

"Michael, stop this! Whatever

you're—"

"You lucked out," he said. "This time."

"I'm hanging up."

"You know I love you, don't you?"

"Good-bye!"

She broke the connection.

She dialed another number almost immediately.

"Mara, it's me."

"What time is it?"

"Sorry to bother you. I know it's late..."

"What's wrong?"

"Michael."

"Is he there?"

"No. But he won't give up."

"Just a minute." There was a faint clicking as Mara turned on her lamp.

"Now. What about Michael?"

"He wants to come over."

"The creep?"

"I know. But he sounds like..."

"What?"

"I can't describe it. His voice isn't—normal."

"He's not normal. Get that through your head."

"He's doing something."

"Oh, dirty phone calls! Listen, girl, there's a law..."

"I just want him to leave me alone."

"I hear that."

"He's been calling all night."

"So take the phone off the hook."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I'm afraid of what he might do."

"To you?"

"To himself."

"So let him! At least you'll get a good night's sleep."

"I can't, now."

"He isn't worth it, Jeannie."

"But what if he—does something?"

"That's your ego talking. This isn't about you. It could be anyone. He just likes the melodrama."

"I think he means it this time."

"Listen. He's a manipulator. He's trying to dominate you. It's the old passive-aggressive bit—control is the name of the game. Take my advice and don't play. Cut it off right now. Clean."

"I tried that. Only..."

"Only what? He's gambling on your weakness. Be strong. Once he finds out he can't make you jump anymore, he'll lose interest. Trust me."

"Maybe I should see him one more time," she said after a pause. "Just to be sure."

"Of what?"

"I don't know. That he's okay."

"You're crazy!"

"He only cheated once..."

"How do you know that?"

"We always told each other everything."

"Oh, really?"

"Well..."

"If he did it before, he'll do it again."

"He says it didn't mean anything."

"Sure. It was just his prick. Like it doesn't even belong to him. He found it in his pocket and thought he better try it out. What the hell."

"It's different for men."

"You got that right. They're not human."

"What's her name?"

"No one you know. Some bimbo with roots. Just his type."

"I think he has a gun."

"Did he threaten you?"

"No."

"Then he's just blowing smoke. Where would he get a gun?"

"His father's a cop. Was. He blew his brains out when Michael was nine."

"Don't worry about it. He doesn't have the guts. Besides, it's none of your business now. Do you hear what I'm saying?"

"I guess."

"You want to come over here?"

"I have to get up in the morning."

"Then take some NyQuil and zone out. Tomorrow you won't remember any of this."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure."

"Thanks, Mara."

"Anytime."

As soon as Mara put the phone down it rang again.

She tried to ignore it. She turned the TV on in her bedroom while the electronic chirping continued for another five minutes. When it finally



stopped, she reached for the phone and punched in a series of numbers with such force that her long fingernail clicked against the keypad and left gouges in the plastic.

He answered right away.

"What is this bullshit about a gun?" she said.

"I knew it was you."

"You don't know jack shit. What are you trying to pull?"

"You talked to Jeannie."

"She's my best friend, remember?"

"I only called to see how she's doing."

"You lying sack of shit."

"I'm worried about her. I swear."

"Well, you can forget it. The girl is fine."

"Is that what she told you?"

"None of your business."

"She's unstable. When I told her I was through with her, she broke down."

"Give me a break!"

"We need to talk."

"You need to go fuck yourself."

"Just talk, that's all. I can be there in twenty minutes."

"You're certifiable, you know that?"

"What more do you want from me?"

"Don't even go there."

"Listen."

There was the sound of metal on metal.

"What are you doing?"

"Cocking the hammer."

"Don't you dare jerk me around!"

Your father was the one with the balls. Not you."

"This is number four."

"Michael—"

"One out of three, now. You like those odds?"

"Cut the crap or I'll call the cops!"

"I only want to talk."

You know I love you..."

"Go to hell."

She slammed down the phone.

He set the cordless telephone in front of him.

There was a notepad and pencil on the living room table, alongside a drinking glass, a fifth of Dewar's scotch, a nickle-plated Smith & Wesson .38 Police Special and a box of Remington hollow-point cartridges. The top of the box was open. None of the rounds were missing.

He picked up the phone and entered a number.

When no one answered, he dialed a second number.

After a few minutes he put the handset down again, poured out an inch of the scotch, held it up in the

light from the lamp and emptied the glass.

Then he took the Smith & Wesson in one hand. He swung the cylinder out, spun it with his other hand sighted through the chambers to be sure they were all empty, then snapped it closed.

He laid it on the table and studied the notepad before taking up the phone again.

This time he got an answering machine.

"Hi," he said. "I just wanted to see if you're all right. Oh, by the way, I didn't get the check. I thought you said you mailed it. If it doesn't get here by Wednesday, I'll have to come over. You don't want me to do that. Anyway, say hello to Dad for me. You know I love you, don't you, Mama?"

As he broke the connection, a white light swept over the front window.

He blinked and looked up.

Now red lights flashed on the other side of the curtains. They might have been taillights but he couldn't be sure.

He lifted the gun, opened it, inserted one of the cartridges and pointed the muzzle across the room.

A car door closed and footsteps started up the walk to the porch.

There was a knock on the door.

He drew the hammer back and waited, not moving a muscle.

The footsteps went away and passed along the side, down the driveway toward the back.

A moment later there was a click in another part of the house.

He turned around in his chair.

A shadow entered the living room from the kitchen.

He squinted into the darkness.

"Jesus," he said. "It's you."

"I used my key," she said.

"I thought you were going to call the cops."

"What do you think you're doing?"

"What do you care?"

She walked over to the table and stood looking down at him.

"I don't," she said. "I just wanted to be sure you're okay."

"I'm fine," he said, "now. I told you, it's over with her."

She saw the box of cartridges with one shell missing. "What the hell is this?"

"My dad's," he said.

"And this?" She reached for his arm under the table, where he had the pistol. "Give it to me."

"Want to play?"

"My God." Her eyes grew wide,



then glassy as tears spilled down her cheeks. "It's true. Oh, my God."

He raised the gun.

She took a step back.

He eased the hammer back down, turned the gun around and held it out to her.

"Go ahead. If I can't have you, I don't care."

She snatched it from him and held it in front of her with both hands. Her knuckles were white.

"You're a player, aren't you?" he said. "It's still one out of two. Or two to one. I forget."

"I should do it," she said. She nodded at the pad and pencil. "What's

that, your suicide note? Perfect! I must have been out of my head. I only went to bed with you because you were so pathetic, always crying about her..."

"I told you, it's over. We don't have to sneak around anymore."

"I should fucking do it." Her face twisted up and she started to sob.

"But I can't. I just can't..."

He closed the box of ammunition and placed it in the drawer, tore the top sheet off the notepad before she could see what was written there, crumpled it and dropped it into the wastebasket. Then he got out of the chair and faced her.

She stared at him, lips trembling.

He took the gun from her.

"Stay," he said.

She kept staring, her eyes so bright that they seemed to give off sparks.

"God damn you," she said.

"We can talk in the morning."

She flung her keys down so hard that they gouged the floorboards and skittered away into the darkness.

Then she turned and crossed to the bedroom.

"Thanks for coming over," he said.

"I can't stand to be alone. You know I love you, don't you, Mara?"

She slammed the door.

He smiled and threw his head back, laughing silently.

He started for the bedroom with a bounce in his step.

When he was halfway there he stopped and returned to the table. He reached down into the wastebasket and retrieved the sheet of paper from the pad. On it was written a list of women's names, at least a dozen of them, with telephone numbers after each one.

He smoothed the paper and slipped it into the drawer.

Then, just to be sure, he stuck the gun into the waistband at the back of his trousers before he followed her to the bedroom, closing the door behind him with a gentle click. ■



Whips & Kisses

Mistress Jacqueline and Vinnie SPIT are dear friends of mine. I met her in 1989 when she contacted me to help write her biography *"Whips & Kisses"* for Prometheus Books. The world-famous diminutive blonde dominatrix and I soon became fast friends. She's wielded her terrible whip in more than 40 fetish films like *"Seduced into Submission"* and *"Mistress Jacqueline's Slavegirl Sluts."* She claims to have modeled her patented verbal humiliation after her stern Bronx mother.

Mistress Jacqueline met Vinnie SPIT back in 1992; they've been inseparable ever since. The creator of such underground, alternative classics like *"Flinch"* and *"Thrust and Disgust"* welcomed the mighty Mistress into his band and his life. With memorable lyrics like, *"Well, you can suck my Italian dick like a*

BRUTARIAN: When did you start playing?

VINNIE SPIT: Music or S/M?

BRUT: Music.

SPIT: I picked up the guitar at age six, then quit. Started playing the piano at nine. Quit. At 12, I tried guitar again—and stuck with it.

BRUT: Is it true that you play 30 instruments?

SPIT: At least 30. I was in my high school orchestra and in a jazz ensemble. In college, I was in the symphony orchestra.

BRUT: What's your musical background, Jacqueline?

MISTRESS JACQUELINE: I studied piano as a little girl. Didn't like it one bit.

BRUT: Ah, so you were forced.

MJ: Back then, you could force me to do something I didn't want to do. Not anymore.

BRUT: But you didn't have a musical background, per se.

MJ: Not at all.

BRUT: You're a natural at drumming, though.

MJ: I really appreciate that. I've only been playing for a few years. It was Vinnie's idea that I become a more integral part of SPIT in addition to singing background vocals.

SPIT: She's a natural performer. One thing has always amazed me about Jacqueline—the way she can just turn it on the minute someone yells 'Action.' That's her professionalism kicking in.

MJ: Thanks, Vin. I also think all the S/M sessions I've done over the years are good practice. The acting and role-playing skills I've developed are a type of public performance, on a small, personal scale.

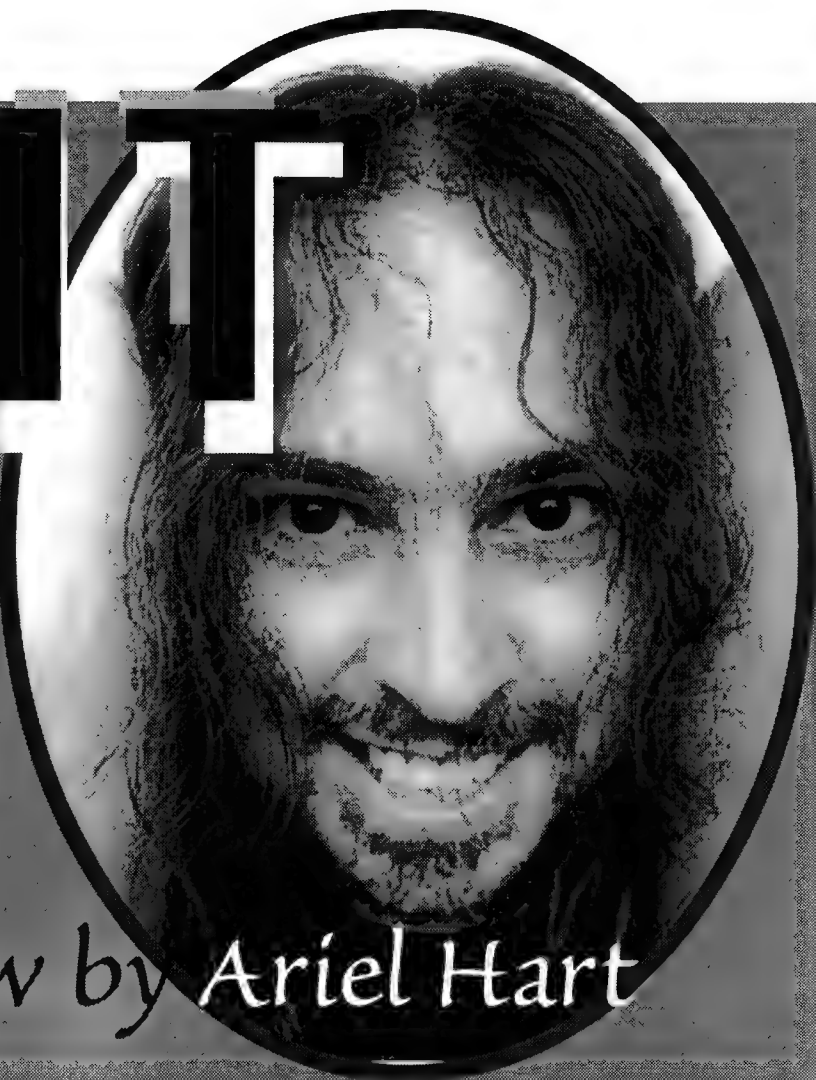
BRUT: I can't get over how nice you guys are, how loving and respectful you are with each other. But put on a SPIT CD and...well, you sound like people who'd throw a beating in an alley.

SPIT: I might beat *you* up in an alley. (Laughter) But seriously, for me, music is a form of release. It's a good way to get out aggressions and anxieties.

SPIT

sausage/Lick my balls like pasta vasool/My little muffin, you need some stuffin'/So spread your ass so I can push in your stool" (from "The Godfather of Smut"), SPIT has the gumption to draw parallels between "To Kill a Mockingbird" and the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas trial ("Anita Long Dong") and poke fun at his native State with merely a word ("Delawhere").

They're two of the nicest, brightest people you'd ever want to meet. (But don't tell anyone.) Enter the real-life dungeon of Mistress Jacqueline and Vinnie SPIT...if you dare.



An Interview by Ariel Hart

Some guys go to the gym and work out. I play and write music. This way, my evil alter ego gets a work-out.

MJ: People have made the same comment to me—that I'm so polite for a dominatrix.

BRUT: But it's true. When I first met you, I didn't know what to expect. I thought you'd be all mean and nasty, smacking strangers on the street and whatnot. That couldn't be further from the truth.

SPIT: Oh, yeah? You should see her in a bondage session.

BRUT: I have. It's unnerving...Isn't it wild that you both come from such similar backgrounds? The two of you are products of very straight, conventional families.

MJ: Right. And we both have degrees in education.

BRUT: Jacqueline, I know you taught high school in Boston and grade school in St. Croix, but I didn't know Vinnie was also a teacher.

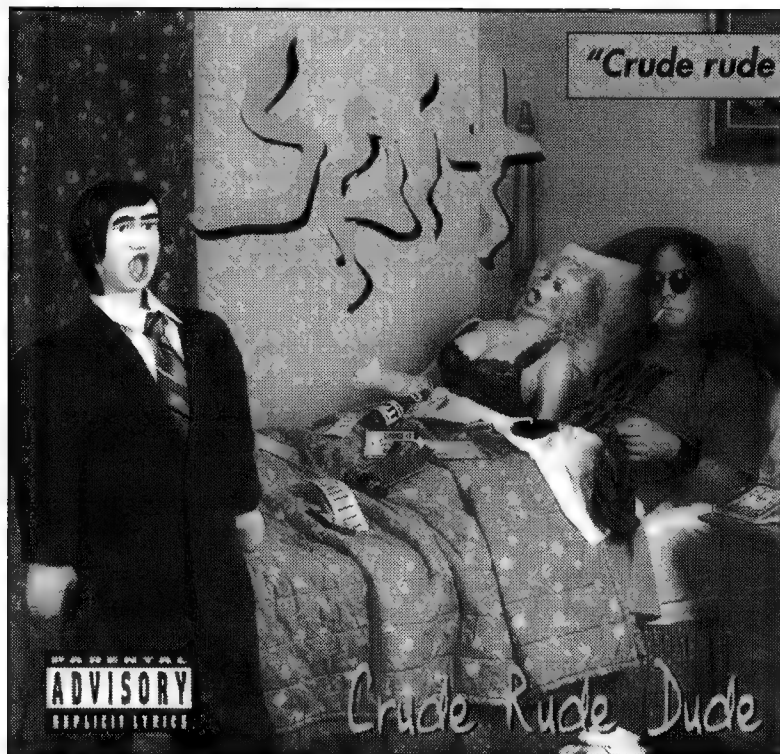
SPIT: I started working in a summer camp for handicapped kids. I did that for seven summers. First, I volunteered, then I was junior counselor, senior counselor, then camp director.

BRUT: That's impressive.

SPIT: In college, I majored in special education. I was a special ed teacher for five years. I liked it a lot. I worked music into the lesson plan whenever I could. I find that handicapped kids really respond well to it.

BRUT: Speaking of which, I heard you and Jacqueline had a unique way of celebrating Christmas this past year.

SPIT: You did? We decided that instead of exchanging presents, we'd take the money we would have spent on each other and buy a couple of guitars for some handicapped, wheelchair-bound kids at the Baher Center here in Woodland Hills, California. Fender Stratocasters with sunbursts, really beautiful pieces of equipment. We also got the kids amps,



"Crude rude dude" by SPIT

We ask people to answer silly questions. If they get them right, they win a free T-shirt. If they get them wrong, they get spanked.

BRUT: Sounds like Gallagher meets Frank Zappa, only filthier.

SPIT: I don't think people really know what to expect at a SPIT performance. Some might be shocked at first, but I don't think anyone ever comes away having a terrible time.

BRUT: How could they?

SPIT: SPIT is politically and sociologically conscious. No one is safe. Everyone takes a hit—fundamentalists, the government, cops ("Squeal like a Piggie"), white trash. I think the best songs are honest songs. What SPIT sings about is the real thing. S/M is a lifestyle for me and Jacqueline, not window-dressing. We have a dungeon *and* a recording studio in our house.

straps and picks. I gave them 10 lessons just to get them started. They were so thrilled. It was a great experience for me, too.

MJ: This Christmas, we're thinking of doing the same thing, but with drums. This time, I'd give the lessons. I'm looking forward to it.

BRUT: That is so cool...This might sound like a corny, "Miss America" question, but what do you hope people get from your music?

SPIT: Number One, that they're entertained. If they laugh, great. If they question authority, great. If it helps them get out aggressions, great. I don't pretend to create music with a message. There's no ulterior motive. What you see is what you get.

BRUT: How did you decide on the name SPIT?

SPIT: I named the band after my worst habit. Then I modified my answer because no girl can ever swallow my load. Take your pick.

BRUT: What can people expect at a SPIT concert?

SPIT: Just about anything. It's like a hard-core burlesque show. Besides crazed sexually-explicit lyrics and kick-ass music, there's poetry, elaborate costumes, short stories and wild skits.

MJ: I always find the audience participation astounding. They willingly volunteer for live, on-stage spankings. People actually come out of the audience, climb on-stage, pull down their pants and get a thrashing. We sometimes do a segment called "Show Us Your Ass," which is a quiz show spoof.

BRUT: How many people can say that?

SPIT: I'm definitely not a poser. Maybe that's why the songs come across so strong.

BRUT: For example, "A Dick Like Mine" is so vivid and gritty that you can almost smell the stale beer and dried piss as some schmuck tries to pick up a girl in a bar.

SPIT:

Those lyrics took months to get right.

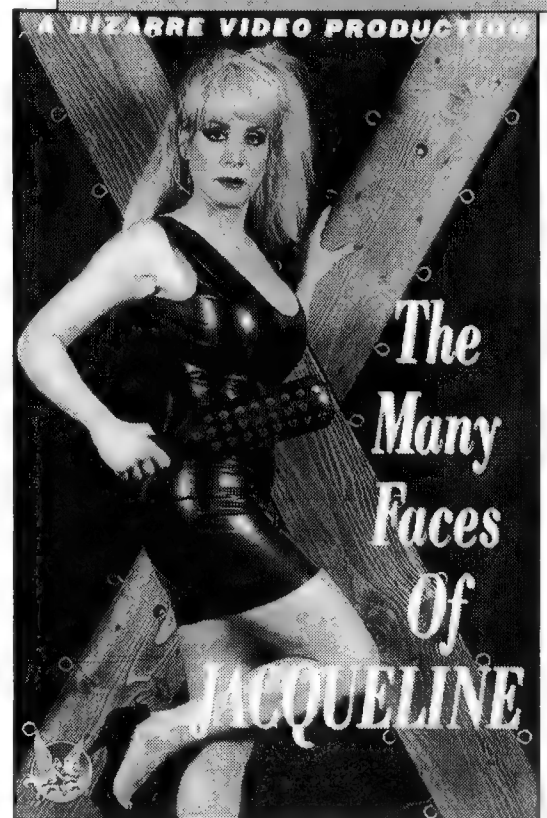
I tried to include every cheesy pick-up line in creation—and make them rhyme.

It was tough, but I did it.

BRUT:

Besides playing around with a standard, "It Don't Mean A

One of Mistress Jacqueline's videos





Hey, look, it's an ass!

Hey, look, another one!

Thing If It Ain't Got

That Sting," includes all that absurd stuff our parents told us when they spanked us like, 'You're not too old to be taken over my knee...'

SPIT: For that song, I collected close to 100 actual sound bytes from old TV shows and movies. I narrowed it down to the best ones and used them.

BRUT: I thought it was hysterical. But my favorite song still has to be "*Mistress Jacqueline*." You used audio clips from many of her TV appearances on shows like *Sally Jessy Raphael* and *The Phil Donahue Show*, didn't you?

SPIT: You noticed. I like that song a lot as well.

MJ: Me, too. For obvious reasons.

BRUT: Let's talk about your latest CD.

SPIT: "*Crude Rude Dude*" is my 11th release. It's put out by Hot Productions and is a compilation of cuts from six previous CDs.

BRUT: Is this your first record deal?

SPIT: No. I've had four or five. My first two records were self-produced. That was over 10 years ago. They both did well. I moved most of the units on my own. The music industry was much more open back then. There weren't many DIY (Do It Yourself) projects on the market. I spent every penny I had and some I didn't on recording new music. After my second CD, I was signed on to NTS and also licensed out some foreign rights.

BRUT: What other labels did you record on?

SPIT: "*You Would If You Loved Me*" was on Vinyl Community. After that, I figured I could self-produce again. I didn't need money from the record companies. I just needed their distribution base.

BRUT: Are you happy with where your musical career is now?

SPIT: I'm very satisfied on this level. Each new CD does better than the one before it. I mean, I know I'll never be a "Smashing Pumpkins," but I'm

not sure I want to

be. I make enough money on other projects, so I can do music for the fun. I love the creativity, the freedom, doing live shows. But as far as record companies go, the bigger the label, the less control you have.

Mistress Jacqueline's
magazine Power X-Change



BRUT: Sounds like you aren't pleased with "*Crude Rude Dude*."

SPIT: Musically, I am. But they made a lot of other changes. They changed the artwork drastically. They chopped the inner notes from a 20 page book-

let to a three page fold-out with the lyrics in teeny-tiny type. Plus, they didn't use a picture of me on the disk itself, which has become something of a trademark.

BRUT: I thought the liners in "*The Godfather of Smut*" had a much more personal feel. When I looked at the new one, I thought, 'What happened?' I loved the cover photo, though.

MJ: Vinnie in bed with a blow-up doll when her blow-up husband walks in on them?

BRUT: How do you think up these things?

SPIT: I guess I'm just a crude, rude dude.

BRUT: What's in SPIT's future?

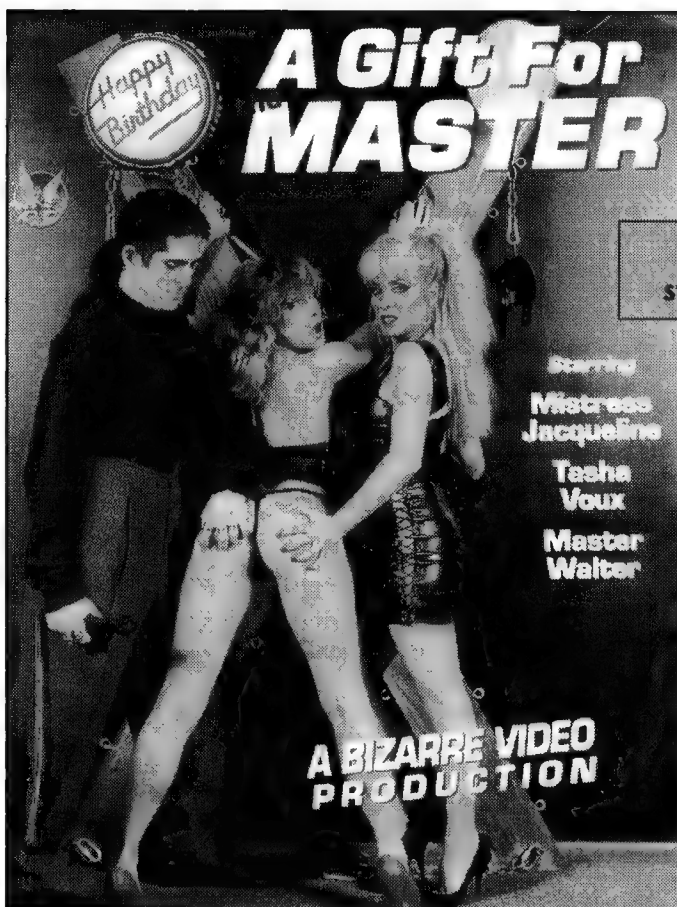
SPIT: I'm being wooed by record companies like CBS and IRS. They constantly tell me that if I literally clean up my act, they'll do something with me. But that's not what I'm about. That's not what the music's about. I'm not out to satisfy the masses.

BRUT: What's your fan base like?

SPIT: Very mixed. Mostly educated. Not many kids. And anyway, they can't get into the "Over 21"

clubs. For the most part, my music doesn't appeal to young people who like predictable music.

Ooooh, a naughty movie starring Mistress Jacqueline



MJ: It always strikes me how loyal SPIT fans are. They come to every show, travel great distances to be there. They buy everything, posters, T-shirts...Tell them about that movie, Vinnie.

SPIT: You know that film "*Father's Day*" with Robin Williams and Billy Crystal? There's a scene where they go looking for their son at a concert. Check it out, there's a girl in the audience wearing a SPIT T-shirt.

BRUT: Cool...Where have you played recently?

SPIT: The last concert we did was in San Diego. It was broadcast live on the Internet. We currently have two acts: a band with 8 to 9 performers, even a horn section, and for smaller venues—which I really like playing because of the intimacy—we have a three-piece band. There's me on guitar, Jacqueline on drums and Cindy on keyboards. It's half live and half on tape. A really rocking show.

BRUT: Word is, there's a big, cross-country tour brewing.

MJ: We should be on the road before Christmas.

SPIT: This time around, I'd like to open for a bigger band instead of being the headline act. We'll see what happens.

BRUT: You better come



HAPPY HOLIDAY GREETINGS
From
Our Family

Mistress Jacqueline
and
Vinnie SPIT

visit me when you're in New York.

SPIT: And you better come to a concert.

BRUT: I can't wait...Before we wind this up, please tell everyone how you two met. I love that story.

MJ: It's very romantic, really. A magazine called *Spank Hard* had an article about SPIT and a review of "Whips & Kisses" on facing pages. That's how



Mistress Jacqueline
and
Vinnie SPIT



Ariel Hart and Mistress Jacqueline
together at a book signing party
at the Limelight in NYC

we first noticed each other. I found something intriguing in Vinnie. I liked what he stood for. To my surprise, he ordered a copy of my book, then wrote me a letter. He knew everything about me right from the start, even my deep, dark secrets. A lot of people write to me, but Vinnie seemed different than all the others. We corresponded back and forth for a while. He sent me a CD and a T-shirt, both of which I loved. When SPIT came to Los Angeles to do a concert, I made sure I went. Vinnie and I hit it off immediately. The next thing I knew, he was moving from Delaware to LA to be with me. **SPIT:** A couple of years later, we got married in Las Vegas during a porn video convention. Ron Jeremy was our best man.

BRUT: I remember. I was supposed to be Maid of Honor, but I couldn't make it out there. It was quite an event, though. It was written up in all the adult magazines...Recently, you've been making a name for yourselves producing, directing and distributing your own fetish videos.

MJ: We have our own company, Pacific Force. We pride ourselves on using real people who are truly into the scene in our videos. Our tapes depict authentic, explicit, hard-core S/M. Hot wax,

bondage, caning, spanking, paddling, we do it all. I'm always flattered when Mistresses from all

over the country come to town and look us up, asking to be in a video. To me, that says a lot.

BRUT: Plus, "*Mistress Jacqueline's Power X-Change*" helps spread the word.

MJ: True. That's one of the many magazines Vinnie and I put out together.

SPIT: But then, I've been in the dirty mag business since the 5th grade.

BRUT: Seriously?

SPIT: Sure. A friend and I used to root through the trash bins in a big apartment complex near where I grew up. We'd sell the magazines we found for twice the cover price. I made enough money to buy my first electric guitar.



MJ: See, Vinnie was profiting from porn even back then.

SPIT: When people are shocked at what I do for a living, I say, 'You should have figured as much.'

BRUT: And the rest is history.

SPIT: Sort of.

For a complete catalog of SPIT and Pacific Force products, write call or e-mail them at: **7095 Hollywood Boulevard, Suite 477, Hollywood, CA 90028, (213) 960-2030.** E-mail address: **VinnieSPIT@ aol.com**



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so long and thanks for all the shoes OUT NOW! 



THE **PSYCHOTRONIC** WORLD OF JOSE LUIS BEHAR

"I only put nudity in my films when it's absolutely necessary—if the plot moves too slow and you need a few naked chicks to liven things up," says psychotronic filmmaker Jose Behar to explain the insertion of a 60's nudie clip into his latest film, the 28 minute minipus *Groovy Squad Versus Dr. Brain*—which he directed as Rock Savage and starred in as Harry Gross, occult investigator. The second *Groovy Squad* pic, *Brain* has all the ingredients of a drive in-movie—campy 60's lingo, a former wrestler, kung fu, a perverted monk, voluptuous girls and a poorly lit, disembodied brain in a glass bubble as an "evil alien from parts unknown" bent on conquering the planet. The catalog blurb for *Mummy A Gore* is a work of art in itself: "Follow Harry Gross and Rex Jones on a bloody trail of carnage as they encounter: disembowelment,

dismemberment, castration and virgin rape! Plus: Kung-Fu action, gratuitous nudity and campy morbid humor thrown in for good measure!"

Lurid plot elements are just one hallmark of a Savage film—bad dubbing is another. At one point in *Brain*, a Dr. Karloff is communicating with the Squad via satellite and the voice match isn't even close—prompting laughter and, as the segment runs on, annoyance. Behar is quick to point out the similarity to a European art film, like *Make Em Die Slowly*. Clumsy voice-overs are an unfortunate side effect of a dubious technical innovation for broke filmmakers addicted to super 8 film stock: shoot it on film with no sound, transfer to video for ease of editing and then dub it. *Brain's* most atrocious effect, however, is a gutting scene rendered more horribly realistic due to the primitiveness of almost every other aspect of the film.

BY JEFF BAGATO

Brain is Behar's ninth film for his own production company, the Savage Film Group. His first flick was shot in 1980 when he was taking classes at Prince Georges Community College, in Maryland, and his film club buddies from those days fill out the *Groovy Squad*. Behar was inspired by two ideals: the need for "a tough guy to come into a horror movie and kick somebody's ass" and the DIY ethic of early midnight movie staples. "I said to myself, you've got Hershell Gordon Lewis in Florida, Romero in Pittsburgh, and Waters in Baltimore, what am I doing sitting on my butt?"

Filmmaker Jeff Krulik (*Heavy Metal Parking Lot*, *Borgnine on the Bus*) documented a different but related side to Behar in *Fanboy*, a short video in which Behar shows off his toy collection and hosts a trip to Spencer's Gifts, a mall shop for tacky goods. Most of Behar's videos are available for sale, and the 15 minute *Vengeance for a Dead Alien*, is on the internet (www.thesync.com). For a free copy of *The Savage Underground*, Behar's catalog/zine packed with psychedelic graphics and filmmaking tips, write P.O. Box 4011, Capitol Heights, MD 20791.

Jose Luis Behar Filmography
Perversions (1980)
Taste of Flesh (1981)
Mummy A Gore Gore (1986)
Groovy Squad and the Zombie Beach Conspiracy (1989)
Maxx Bloodd, Vampire Spy (1993)
Vengeance for a Dead Alien (1996)
Psychosexual World of Rock Savage (1997)
Fanboy's Weekend of Terror (1997)
Groovy Squad Vs Dr. Brain (1997)

BRUTARIAN: Who is Rock Savage?

BEHAR: He's my alter ego who makes films. He reared his ugly head in 1980 when I first started filming.

BRUTARIAN: That's when you made

your first movie?

BEHAR: Yeah. Made it at PG Community College. It was a mock-documentary called *Perversions*.

BRUTARIAN: That's not in your catalog.

BEHAR: No, but it's going to be part of a film soon. You know how we did *Psychosexual World of Rock Savage*, which is a compilation tape of weird educational films. I'm digging up some more, and I'm going to include *Perversions* in the next compilation. It's only about 15 minutes long.

BRUTARIAN: Where did you get those films on *Psychosexual World*? Did you really dig them out of a dumpster?

BEHAR: Somebody did. I'm not nasty enough to go into dumpsters, unfortunately. There's a few trade magazines like the *Big Reel*, where you can make contact with filmmakers who have literally saved many educational films from being destroyed. I guess when these films ran their lifetime they became dated—the fashion styles, the mode of speaking—and became campy and entertaining. Teachers don't want to entertain their students. That's why they hate television and Power Rangers—they don't want you to be entertained, they want you to be educated. So as far as these teachers were concerned, these films had no value. But for filmmakers and film historians and archive kinda guys like myself they're very valuable and entertaining. Especially *LSD-25* [included on *Psychosexual World*].

BRUTARIAN: Are those films available anywhere else?

BEHAR: *LSD-25* is available through a lot of other people on different compilations. But nobody has *It Happens*, about



teen pregnancy. It's pretty cool.

BRUTARIAN: So you bought prints from somebody and there could be other prints existing?

BEHAR: Well, we'd like to think so, but I don't know. Nobody keeps the negatives of those films. I'm glad there's more than one print out there of *LSD-25*—some of them are faded, some are choppy. The one I have is in pretty good condition. Unfortunately there's a buzz on the soundtrack of *It Happens*, but I'm going to re-do the transfer later and see if I can mix it out. You can still hear the dialog and everything, but it's almost like you're really in the classroom, with the projector right there.

BRUTARIAN: Tell me more about Rock Savage.

BEHAR: I always thought it sounded cooler than my own name. That name was influenced by the pulps—you had Doc Savage, the Shadow, the Spider. Although Doc Savage had a cool name, he wasn't as vicious as the other heroes. I thought there should be a pulp hero named Rock Savage; Rock sounds so much tougher, and I always thought "Why does he have to be a doctor?"

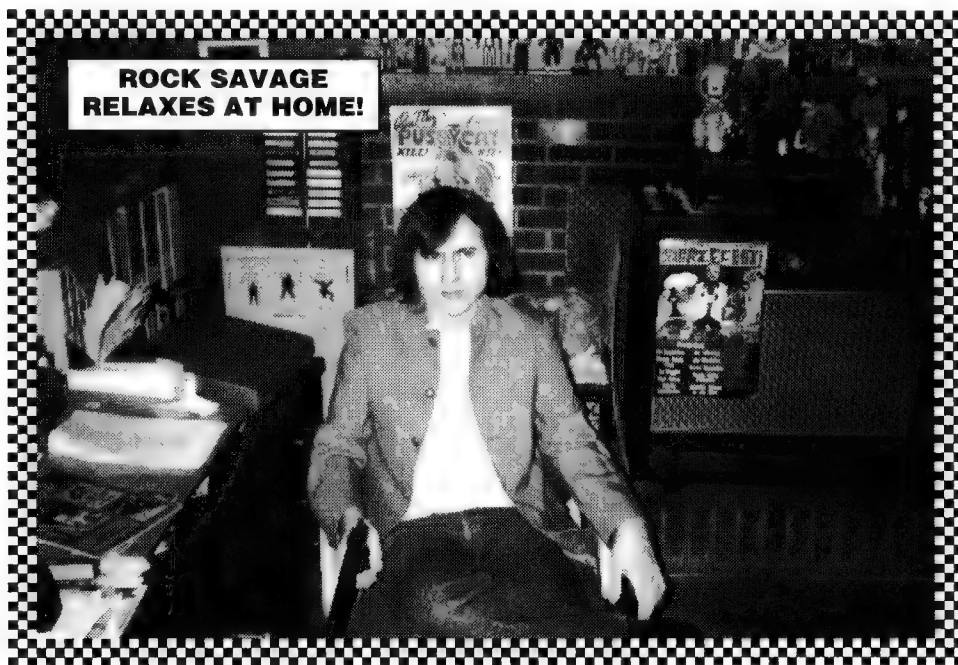
BRUTARIAN: Does Rock Savage allow

you to do things you otherwise wouldn't do? In approaching girls to be stars, telling them to take off their clothes...

BEHAR: Of course! He's much more bold. There's so many things you can get away with when you've got a camera.

BRUTARIAN: What's the relationship between Rock Savage and Fanboy? I noticed you had a movie with Fanboy in your catalog. I thought it was just something Jeff Krulik came up with.

BEHAR: Jeff Krulik loves the name Fanboy, and basically that was his concept. He considers himself a fanboy, and basically we're all fanboys. Quentin Tarantino considers himself a fanboy. I guess now it's hip. It used to be a derogatory term and I didn't particularly care for it. I tried to lobby him to call me Rock Savage.



BRUTARIAN: When you wear the nehru jacket are you Fanboy or Jose or Rock Savage?

BEHAR: All three really. Although Jose wouldn't dare wear a nehru jacket at work. But Rock Savage would wear one in public. Fanboy was supposed to be the host of *Neat Stuff* [a cable TV show] which is now defunct.

BRUTARIAN: I know you have a real problem with filming on video. Let's talk about your technique of filming on real film and transferring to video.

BEHAR: One of the things we discovered when we were working with Super 8 film back in our college days is that sometimes you get the horrible whirl of

the camera. We had to Barney the camera with styrofoam, but it was an ordeal to do that, because then you couldn't get to certain buttons or faders and all that good stuff. Also you had to position the microphone real close or you wouldn't be able to hear any of the dialog, and it's a real pain shooting sound on Super 8. It's never been known for having great sound. You get very good pictures but the sound will be horrible. Later when video transfer became more available, it occurred to me that we could avoid all these problems—including expensive retakes on film as the price kept going up and up and basically harmful to the wallets of people with day jobs. I thought if we transferred to a higher grade of tape like 3/4 inch video [we could dub] all the sound directly on there. At the time I still spliced the film directly. We

started doing this in 1986 when we did *Mummy a Gore Gore*. The sound came out great, and we had the convenience of video and the look of film.

Unfortunately some of the dialog is out of sync, giving it the look of a foreign film.

BRUTARIAN: As I said to you before, that's one of the weirdest things, because the dubbing isn't even close. It's like you didn't even try to make it close.

BEHAR: The funny part is that we do try. But we have actors who improvise, and when there's something not on the script—there you go. *Vengeance for a Dead Alien*, which you can see on the

internet, is the best dubbing we've had, but because of they have to stream video, that's now out of sync, but so is everybody else's film on the internet. That movie features one of my continuing characters—it's a Harry Gross film. And that's going to be part of an anthology also.

BRUTARIAN: Tell me about Harry Gross.

BEHAR: I was a big fan of *Kolchak the Nightstalker* back in the 70s. It only lasted a season. It was one of my favorite shows, because I love horror movies and action films. But horror movies rarely have any cool heroes in them. Mostly you just have your wimpy victims that just run. There's nobody cool to take charge of the situation. That's one thing I liked about *Kolchak*; he was a nosey reporter—one of the few honest journalists with integrity, which is why he never got anywhere.

BRUTARIAN: Harry Gross developed out of that need to see a strong hero in a horror movie.

BEHAR: Basically Harry Gross was a character I wanted. Harry Gross was the hero in our second film at PG College, called *Zombies on Campus*. The problem was that I was 19 when we shot that but I looked 15, so I started wearing the shades. Later I re-edited the film to make it look sharper and renamed it *Taste of Flesh*, which is available in our catalog. I also changed the music, because the original music was AC/DC and stuff like that.

BRUTARIAN: Do you ever laugh about the way the dubbing turns out?

BEHAR: At first I didn't think it was funny. I was irritated by it. But when we showed it people thought it was actually cool—which had me scratching my head for a while. I guess it has cult appeal. It gives it an art film look, like foreign films dubbed in English but badly out of sync, which everybody thinks is cool. People may think it's a European trash film, like those spaghetti horror films, like *Zombies* or *Make Em Die Slowly*. They're badly out of sync but they're still powerful films and they get their point across. Believe me, if the dubbing bothered me that much, I'd have found a way to fix it by now.

BRUTARIAN: Do you see yourself as making psychotronic films?

BEHAR: Sure. I love those kind. To me, those are the best kind. I grew up going to the drive-in. Since the early 70s.

BRUTARIAN: What was the first one that you saw that you said "I've got to make a movie like that?"

BEHAR: I would have to say it was probably a film by Hershell Gordon Lewis that inspired me to make films. I didn't realize who Lewis was at the time until I read about him later in the *Monster Times*, a tabloid horror newspaper that came out twice a week, believe it or not. It was an east coast thing.

BRUTARIAN: Are you influenced by Ed Wood at all?

BEHAR: Not really. I don't plan to dress up like a woman or anything like that. I was more inspired by Lewis and especially his partner David Friedman. Although Ed Wood should be an inspiration to all filmmakers because he was so persistent. But the fact is that Lewis had very little to work with and actually made a profit, while Ed Wood constantly struggled. Lewis had more business sense, which is something many filmmakers could use. We all know how to put it together and get it finished, but once we're done it's like "Now what do I do with it?" They've got all these great film courses, but they don't have any on how to market your film.

I JUST THOUGHT THAT PEOPLE WOULD RATHER SEE A MOVIE BY ROCK SAVAGE THAN BY JOSE LUIS BEHAR!

-JOSE LUIS BEHAR!

BRUTARIAN: One thing that makes me think of Ed Wood is that you also have a character. You see yourself as Rock Savage and he had his own persona behind the camera that you don't know about until you read about it.

BEHAR: Actually, Ed Wood only saw himself as Ed Wood. What comes closer is Ray Dennis Steckler, who did *Incredibly Strange Creatures*. He directs as Ray Dennis Steckler, but he stars in them as his alter ego Cash Flagg. I just thought that people would rather see a movie by Rock Savage than by Jose Luis Behar. At least, I would rather see a film by Rock Savage, just as I'd rather see a film with Harry Gross than to see a body count film where you just count the victims at the end. That got boring real quick.

BRUTARIAN: Why did you start making films?

BEHAR: I was a big movie fan in the 70s, and I thought it would be great to be in movies. I'd rather be an action hero or in comedies. I was a big Benny Hill fan, and I would have loved to be in comedies with lots of naked girls in

them. But there's so many negative people around you when you're growing up, and they all said "Oh, you're too short to be in films." Then I picked up an issue of *Monster Times* and read about Hershell Gordon Lewis, and the fact that he was making his own films out of Florida before there was an MGM studio, in the late 50s to the early 70s. He was basically doing it his way; he had his own little stock company of actors. Later I read

about George Romero making films out of Pittsburgh. I said "Wait a minute. I don't have to go to Hollywood to make films, I could probably do them out of Maryland." And then when I read

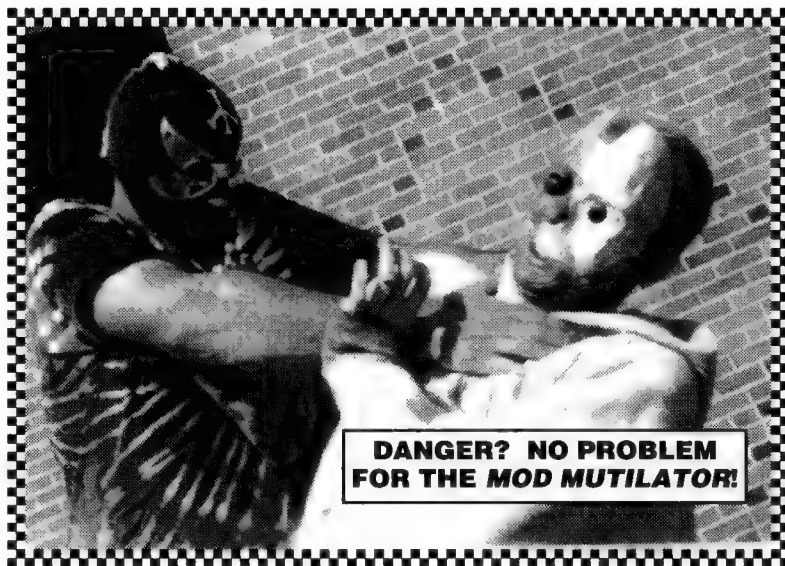
about John Waters in Baltimore, I said "I've got to do this too. You got Hershell Gordon Lewis in Florida, George Romero in Pittsburgh, and John Waters in Baltimore, what am I doing sitting on my butt?" In college I joined the Film Production Club, which wasn't going anywhere. When the president left, I took over and we started making films. Let's say I persuaded the Student Government Board to give us money. They paid for part of *Zombies on Campus*, but we had to pay to finish it. They bought the film stock—but it was beyond the expiration date, and it wasn't enough to finish the movie, so we had to work quickly.

BRUTARIAN: How did you meet Eric Koger?

BEHAR: Eric is from our college days.

BRUTARIAN: And the Mod Mutilator?

BEHAR: The official story on the Mod



DANGER? NO PROBLEM FOR THE MOD MUTILATOR!

Mutilator is that he's a barred professional wrestler. He was a jobber for the NWF—one of those guys paid to lose. He gives our films a touch of the Santo movies of Mexico, like the Man of a Thousand Masks, who still wrestles by the way, even though he's in his late 40s. These guys made their own horror films, too. They had real wrestlers fighting gangsters and monsters and other supernatural elements.

BRUTARIAN: Which goes along with your need to have a hero in those films.

BEHAR: That's right, they needed the tough guy to come in, save the day and kick somebody's ass.

The nucleus of the Savage Film Group are from my college days: Eric Koger, Frank Losallo and myself.

BRUTARIAN: Do you still work with Rob Lippert?

BEHAR: Not any more.

BRUTARIAN: What happened there?

BEHAR: Well, Rob's pretty eccentric...

BRUTARIAN: I know he was in Psychodrama [infamous performance group from Virginia that often performed and made videos with Lisa Suckdog].

BEHAR: You remember that group?

They were pretty shocking. He was one of the people who answered one of our flyers. He worked with us on *Mummy A Gore Gore*, and *Maxx Bloodd*. He appeared in one scene, with the mayor.

BRUTARIAN: It seemed like he did a lot of work with editing and sound.

BEHAR: Absolutely. *Maxx Bloodd* was our major experiment with video. We had already tried dubbing the sound onto video, the next thing was to avoid ugly splices. Rob had access to all this equipment, and he suggested transfer-

ring the entire uncut film to 3/4 inch video, and editing the video from one deck to another, and that includes doing the credits. And then postproduction dubbing as usual. Because of that *Maxx Bloodd* has a very professional and sleek look to it, and I think the dubbing is alot better than in most of our films.

BRUTARIAN: It was better than *Groovy Squad Vs. Dr. Brain*.

BEHAR: Well, on *Groovy Squad*, it got late into the night, what can I say.

Groovy Squad we dubbed in one night, *Maxx Bloodd* we dubbed in two nights.

BRUTARIAN: I really liked the effect in *Maxx Bloodd* when Crakheadd gets his head smashed.

BEHAR: Oh, great! It was Frank Losallo's idea to make a duplicate of Crakheadd's big head that was shaped like a rock of crack. He said "Why don't I get a glass jar and make it look like the back of Crakheadd's head and then you can take a baseball bat and smash it. I thought it would look really fake."

BRUTARIAN: With the good editing I guess it worked.

BEHAR: We had access to the video toaster—we had it down to the frame editing this, and it just went so smooth! It catches a lot of people by surprise.

BRUTARIAN: The other good effect you had—in both *Maxx Bloodd* and *Groovy Squad* was when they start disemboweling people and taking organs out. It's pretty disturbing because you do it for so long! It looks really real!

BEHAR: People tell me this all the time, but it's our simplest effect. The effect of Crakheadd's head busting was alot harder. I traded tapes with the guy who does *8 Track Mind*, and I sent him *Mummy a Gore Gore*, which has the same type of effect of a girl being gutted out. And when he showed it to some of his friends they insisted he turn it off—they said they thought they were watching a snuff movie!

BRUTARIAN: It's weird because the other techniques like the dubbing are primitive, but then you have this scene that looks real—and you wonder how the effects could be done so well, and think "Maybe it is real!" That may be one way the dubbing pays off, because it makes the effects stronger.

BEHAR: I think it unsettles people because the film has this campy tone and suddenly there's this horrible death scene. At DC Space we showed one of our movies where these zombies are

eating people, and the effect is pretty realistic. One of the actors was really getting into his role and it looks like he's actually putting the stuff in his mouth and people in the audience were gagging! It was great! I guess I was working so close that to me it didn't look real.

BRUTARIAN: What kind of response do you want the audience to have?

BEHAR: I think it's cool. I love to surprise people. I love them to laugh at the campy parts that were intentional—although it's hard to predict what an audience will laugh at, especially a psychotronic audience. There are some guys out there who think *Faces of Death* is funny.

BRUTARIAN: Where did you get the gratuitous nudity in *Groovy Squad Vs. Dr. Brain*? You know where you open the door and there's these naked girls writhing around.

BEHAR: That's from my collection. You can see the full reels in *Psychosexual World*. Those were self-contained ten minute loops of 60s go go girls—presumably college girls—taking it off in their apartments. Those were the stag films of the 60s.

BRUTARIAN: Why did you put that in?

BEHAR: Why not? I only put nudity in films when it's absolutely necessary, like when the plot moves a little slow and you need a few naked chicks to liven things up.

BRUTARIAN: That seems to jive with your movie length theory.

BEHAR: I discovered when I made *Mummy a Gore Gore*, which is a film that a lot of people love, that a couple scenes that run too long. I learned from my own mistakes. Rob's friend Jim Decay had this great song, "Cruisin'," and I said let's have a scene where Harry is driving around looking for clues on the trail of the mummy and we'll play the song. Now the song was only five minutes long. But we ended up with seven minutes of driving, interrupted by a scene where Harry goes into an adult bookstore, with a cut to gratuitous nudity to liven things up. This scene goes on way too long. One of the things I'm doing now is editing that scene. What I learned from that mistake is that a movie shouldn't be longer than it needs to be to tell a story. There's a lot of filmmakers that are so self-indulgent they don't realize they need to edit themselves. That's especially true of the new breed of so-called "independent" film-

makers. They make these movies about these really boring subjects—like themselves. I can't imagine making a movie about my private life. I'd bore myself!

BRUTARIAN: Does that go along with your personal vision for movie making?

BEHAR: My personal vision is that films have to be entertaining. The only bad film is a boring film. That's why I don't consider Ed Wood a bad filmmaker, because he was never tedious.

BRUTARIAN: What's next for you?

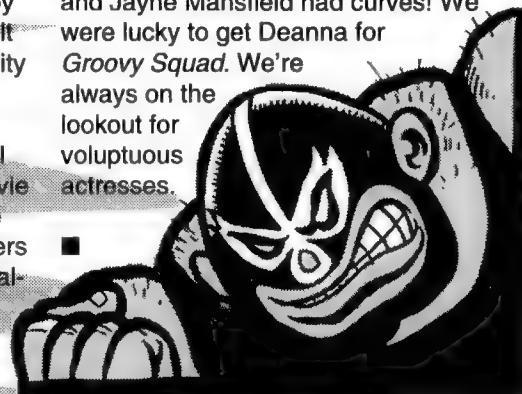
BEHAR: I'm going to do an anthology of films, including *Vengeance for a Dead Alien*. The Mod Mutilator will have a short film to himself, and so will Rex Jones from the *Groovy Squad*. The collection will be called *Hardboiled Heroes*, and everything will be shot in black and white. The next thing we'll work on is a Harry Gross film called *My Gun is Groovy*. It's gonna have hallucinations, LSD, and even a few monsters.

BRUTARIAN: Do you write everything yourself?

BEHAR: Yes, but I take suggestions from my cast. Like Frank Losallo—who was the Mad Monk, and Dr. Karloff and the voice of Dr. Brain. He's taken acting classes so he helps me rewrite awkward dialog. Unfortunately, this is sometimes why the dubbing comes out bad, because he rewrote it. When it comes time to dub, he'd lost his script, so all we had was the original dialog to work with.

BRUTARIAN: How would you describe *Groovy Squad VS Dr. Brain*?

BEHAR: It's a bizarre hybrid of an action film, a spy film and a monster film, with elements of science fiction and horror. We try to put voluptuous women in our films because we're tired of all these Hollywood films with all these skinny women put on these abnormal diets, where they've got their ribs showing and for some reason it's supposed to be so sexy. Bring back the Playboy era when women had meat on their bones and Jayne Mansfield had curves! We were lucky to get Deanna for *Groovy Squad*. We're always on the lookout for voluptuous actresses.



“Abortion after the fact, that’s what it was,” the old woman said, rocking her chair back gently. Beneath her the ancient porch floor, warped with weather and time screeched a lonesome cry. “A termination of motherhood,” she continued. “Hell, seventeen years and motherin’ never got any easier. But then nobody ever said it would. Bear that in mind, little girl.”



The “little girl” was Lauren. She had been living in the city for more than ten years, having escaped the mountain with the quickness of her long legs and the sharpness of her mind. But she would always be “little girl” to old Granny, whom she tried to see two or three times a year. She thought the old tales were the ramblings of an ancient, uneducated mountain woman, fiction laced with a thread of fact.

“This was quite a time before I met Mr. Abraham,” Granny said.

Lauren smiled at the formal way Granny always referred to her late husband. A sweet, wistful tone crept into her cracked voice whenever she said that name.

“I can’t rightly recall the year, but it was some time before the great war. You know how late in my life it was when I finally married Mr. Abraham — I was on the downside of thirty. My child bearing days was almost finished when your daddy came along.” She touched Lauren’s face with her cool tissue paper fingers. “I think my first boy spoiled me on men, and on children, at least until I met your grandpa.

“Momma passed on just before my ninth birthday, Papa when I was going on sixteen. I was the last of that clan and took up housekeepin’ alone. Back then, sixteen was a hell of a lot nearer to bein’ grown than nowadays. I gardened and canned enough to keep me fed during those mountain winters. And the Good

Lord always seemed to bless me with enough left over to sell or trade in the village to keep me supplied with the necessities. Of course, I had help from some of the neighboring farmers and trappers. Favors. One would bring freshly kilt rabbit and deer, another would mend the roof and the rattling floorboards. Yet Another would make certain I kept enough wood on hand for the fireplace and stove. Favors. I wasn’t grown enough to know what they was doing with me. I learnt quick that even guardian angels have a price.

“Every damn one of ‘em made certain my bed was warm during the dead of winter.”

She sighed as if tired of speaking, then fell silent for a few moments. Assuming the old woman had talked herself to sleep, Lauren straightened up slightly to get a look at Granny’s face. She saw that the woman’s dull gray eyes were wide open, appearing lost in her thoughts. Shortly the rhythmic screeching of the old rocker upon the old floorboards resumed, as did Granny’s story.

“I don’t know which one it was who left me with child, but I always had my suspicions, just by the gorgeous head of yellow hair the boy had from the time he was born. But one of those fellers had a terrible secret, I’ll tell you. One hell of a secret.”

Lauren was somewhat captivated, however, Granny’s wild stories were

Twilight

POISON

BY DONNA TAYLOR BURGESS

ART BY DONNA LUPIE



nothing new to her. "What sort of secret, Granny?" she asked.

"The child was a man-beast. The body of a human, the soul of a wild animal."

Lauren almost laughed, but bit it back. Every time she left the mountain after her visits, she wondered all the way back to the city if the woman was senile or if she was putting her on. "This did not become plain to me until perhaps his twelfth year," Granny said. "The time of a boy's life when the change comes. But as I thought on it later, I reckon it should have been evident from the time he was born."

Granny rocked in the rickety old chair, her sewing forgotten in her lap. Screech. Screech. The sun was sinking low, hidden by the jagged mountain top to the west, leaving behind a trail of red smears along the bruised flesh of the early autumn sky.

"The boy was called Ethan, for my own father. Not knowing who the child's father was, I couldn't very well name him for him." She uttered a hoarse, brittle laugh. "Besides, it would have caused a scandal. All my 'guardian angels' were married men; all but one already had children. As far as I know, anyway, unless that fellow had one hidden away somewhere. Or else had it killed at the first sign of the sickness. Stayed gone often, too, perhaps to hide his

own bouts of fever. But it was never proved.

"I brought Ethan into the world alone, bleeding until I thought I was dying. I bled until it soaked through my mattress and puddled on the floor underneath. Through the window, I could see the moon's cold, fat face staring me down.

"When morning came I had a tiny son in my arms, suckling my breast, his soft little fist twined into my matted hair."

"Those years when Ethan was small, those were some of the best years of my life. Hard times, yes, but good ones all the same. We was content, the two of us."

Lauren remained quietly at her grandmother's foot on the steps, the lonesome screech of the rocking chair a counterpart to the growing sound of the insects. A soft mountain breeze fragrant with honeysuckle kissed her sweat dampened brow, but imme-

diately she noticed the putrid smell of something rotten underlying the perfume. It was that smell that brought back memories of childhood in the hills, of something lying dead just beyond the dooryard, at the darkened edge of the forest.

Granny continued on, her face just a hint of pale, craggy flesh, her eyes and mouth ragged holes in the gathering darkness. "As I said, those were the best years, but on the heels of that time came the worst.

"I began to discover secrets about my beloved."

She picked up her sewing as if she had decided to let the story rest, but then put it back down again.

"A terrible secret," she said in a near-whisper. "Along about the time Ethan was eleven or twelve, a good number of the village children disappeared. Not all at a time, now, but one or two every few months or so.

"First time it was a set of twins, I remember, gone from the front porch, no more than toddlers. Folks assumed they'd wandered off and everyone got to searching the woods, the streams. Me and Ethan beat the trails from here to old Braxton's Gap that evening, the mist like a blanket of gray wool lying across the ground. Kept expectin' to trod upon a tiny little hand in that mist and be burdened with carrying the news back to their mamma that they was done for.

"But nobody ever saw those babies again.

"As time passed on that year, another came up missing. And then another. All the while Ethan hunting for 'em with the others like the fine young fellow we all thought he'd become."

She stopped a moment, the rocking chair still under her. The absence of the screeching floorboards and her dry voice created a silence so deep it was deafening. Granny seemed to stare into the darkness, then breathed out a long shuddering sigh.

"A might dark it's gotten on us," she commented. "Get up and switch on that porch light, would you, dear? The wild things tend to creep a little too close to the house in the dark."

Lauren did as Granny asked, somewhat amused that the old woman had actually succeeded in frightening herself with her tales.

When she was seated, Granny went on.

"As those young 'uns kept coming up

gone, I began to hold a fear that my Ethan would be next though he was a little older than they was. So I kept him in my sight as best I could, calling for him from time to time as he did his chores out back beyond the chicken house. His answer would set my mind at ease, at least for a bit.

"But one day his answer did not come as it usually would, ringing out strong and clear, a boy's voices taking on the deep tones of a man's.

"Again I hollered and nothing came. My heart began to ache from fright and I remembered throwing my good washing down in the dirt as I was toting it to the line. I knowed sure as the world he was done in, running across the yard, hollering his name over and over.

"Once I reached the chicken coop, I hollered for him again, and he answered me. 'Right here, Ma. I'm okay. But don't come in!'

"By then I was so shook up, I burst through the door anyway, ready to wear his ass out for giving me such a scare."

She shook her head slowly. "I was the boy's job to tend the chickens and he'd been doing it so well, I never thought to check behind him. I hadn't been in the coop in months.

"I still wonder how he ever did those things without me knowing. I never heard or seen nothing. Not once.

"What he did to those precious children, I cannot begin to tell. Faces peeled from skulls like rubber masks, nailed stretched and distorted to the walls of the coop. Limbs strewn wall to wall gnawed to the bone. Dear Jesus! Pools of innards gone to rot lying about, maggots writhing. Hens, fattened to the point of bursting from what I thought was the gentle care of my own son, trodding through it all, pecking here and there at tufts of brittle hair and squirming white maggots.

"Ethan stood still, his back to me. He dropped a little arm he had been holding to the floor. To my fright, it had been gnawed as well, the fingers bare of skin and flesh as was part of the hand itself. The stink was powerful enough to make me gag, and I breathed through my mouth, trembling like a scared baby.

"B-boy, why didn't you answer me?" I asked foolishly.

"He shrugged and slowly turned to me. He was grinning, his mouth and teeth red-smear.

"Remember, Ma. The wolves wear baby skins," he whispered. "Lambs are

scarce where I'm from.' His grin became a snarl like a wild dog and I backed out the door of the coop.

"Shaking, but I was determined to stand my ground with him. 'You clean this mess up,' I told him. 'It best be done 'fore supper.' And to this day, I never told another soul what I found out there but you, Laurie.

"Knowing the things he did to those babies — I swear it broke my heart. But I was determined that it wasn't to happen again. Not if I could help it.

"He did as he was told, cleaned that hen-house. He buried those carcasses and limbs and bits of skin out back. Felt good to be rid of it, I tell you, but I couldn't go out back without thinking of it. I could never look at my Ethan again without it laying heavy on my mind.

"I took to watching him even more carefully. He didn't go to the outhouse without my knowing. But it was the dark of night when he did his dirty doings. Thought he could slip out on me, he did, while I was sleeping. But Mama always knows.

"I followed him.

"I thought my good little son had a bad streak in him. Didn't make me love him any less, but it hurt. Took me following him to piece it all together, something that should have been as plain as the nose on my face. Folks think of it as demon possession, the taste for human flesh. Others, ones more like myself, wrote it off as plain meanness. Lycanthropy it's called in books, a sign of the beast within. The wer-child was my Ethan. Warn't no help trying to figure out who his daddy was by then; men in these parts can hold secrets forever, if they'd a mind to.

"He slipped out on the night of the full moon.

"I followed him for near 'bout four miles, back down the mountain to the edge of the village. I kept to the shadows, letting the full moon on his blond head guide my way. And I stayed down wind, 'cause if my hunch was true, I knowed his sense of smell might be keen during those times. Briars and skeletal limbs tore at my face and hair, yet I followed the boy, even as the fever gripped him and he began to run. I could hear his breath. Grunts and groans.

"I remember him cutting across the creek, Boran's creek, all dried to a trickle now, and could hear him splashing. But I got turned around. Couldn't see him at all, not even the moon shining on that glorious blond head.

"Wasn't long after that I lost him com-

pletely. That horrible grunting and the snap of branches and dry leaves under his feet, it all faded from me as I stood in the middle of the pitch black forest, confused as hell.

"Took me damn near all night to find my way back home."

The old woman sighed and wiped worriedly at her weathered lips with the side of her hand. "Didn't find out till that Sunday at preaching that another one had come up missing.

"I took to chaining him on the nights of the full moon. First time, I had to trick him to do it, then after that I chained him up before he woke the morning of the full moon and leave him like that until it passed.

"It was the most awful commotion you'd ever heard, him chained like that, the moon shining down through the window on him. Warn't nothing like them foolish old movie pictures, now. My Ethan didn't grow a big bush of hair and a snout. But he did change, maybe only enough for me to tell. It was an evil look in his eyes, a gleam that looked like he knowed the devil himself, and was a personal friend.

"He'd howl, curse me out, language like I'd never heard and could not believe he'd ever know. He'd buck up and down on that bed, until I thought he'd break it to pieces.

"I knowed from those first few times that I'd better come up with some other way of keeping him away from the little ones. He was a growing boy. Chains wouldn't hold him forever. Besides, you just don't know how it hurt to see my beloved chained like some sort of beast.

"A beast, I thought. And that's how I decided I should try to get the beastliness out of him."

Lauren sat rubbing her arms with her hands. The night air had a bite to it suddenly, and Granny's story was actually pulling her in. Werewolves, she thought, not very amused anymore. She was chilled inside and out, tempted to make a quick get-way back to the lighted skies of the city. Above her, large silken-winged moths flapped against the bare porch bulb, creating hawks' shadows on the raggedy slatted floor and all across Granny's wrinkled face. It was quiet for a moment. Then, far away in the night, a dog barked.

The old woman grinned, revealing a row of very white, very straight teeth. They — were store-bought, and a contrast to the worn-out skin of her face. "I bought us a herd of swine," she said. "It was flesh the hoy craved at the times of the full moon. Flesh and blood. But honestly, small chil-

dren were a hell of a lot easier to catch than a slick-skinned little piglet.

"Having cleared out all the chickens, I chased a young sow into the henhouse. Ethan had already commenced to change as I led him out there. The moon was on the rise as we crossed the dooryard, and I could hear him growling deep from the back of his throat like an old bear. His grip on my hand grew painful as the moonlight empowered him. And when I turned to look back at him, his face was ashadow, all but his eyes. His eyes glowed a deep yellow, the same yellow as that old moon rising above us. I couldn't help but wonder a bit if the boy was going to kill me before we ever made it out to that henhouse.

"Didn't have to tell him what I was doing; he'd figured it out when he heard that little piglet carrying on and wanting out. So I let him in there, then chained the door shut behind him so he couldn't get out till sunup when I let him out.

"I stood outside the door a moment, listening, but shortly I realized it was something I was best off not knowing much about. I only wish I'd left it that way. Hearing that little animal cry out like that, it near about broke my heart. And to know my own gentle son could cause such pain and fear.

"I ran back to the house quick as I could, lit up every last lamp in the place, until it was like daylight. And I prayed that night, I'll tell you. When I woke the next morning, I was still on my knees at the side of my bed, resting my head on the Bible I'd spread open in front of me.

"He got to calling it the 'twilight poison', the flesh and blood I provided. When his belly was full with it, he seemed to feel a great sense of well-being. It had a calming effect, such as no drug or mountain remedy I'd ever witnessed.

"But fear'll make folks do horrible things, let me tell you. It makes men into monsters, brings out badness worse than that they're fearin'." Granny dropped her voice again, as if she thought someone would actually hear her out there on the mountainside, on



the front porch of a falling-in house.

"The fall of the year came. The young 'uns had stopped turning up gone; I'd kept Ethan 'straight' for more than two, three months. But folks hadn't forgotten, not by any means. We still prayed for their safe return at the end of the Sunday preaching, though they all knowed they wasn't coming back.

"About that same time, a stranger passed through these parts, looking for work and a hot meal, a colored man. Folks were still looking for a place to lay blame and this fellow came along just in time. He wandered the village and out to the farms, sleeping in barns and living off leftover table scraps for more than a week.

"Then of course, someone decided it was all his fault those kids never came home. Got to thinking maybe this man had been lurking about since the summertime and finally pickings got so spare, he decided to show his face. The men, those 'guardian angels' who had done me all those favors, lured him into the middle of town one evening, just before suppertime. Told him

of some work to be done for a hot meal and a decent night's board. But there wasn't ever any job for him. The nigra must have been a fool to believe them, or else that desperate.

"They lynched him at sunset, from the oak out front of the church. The people had found a place to lay blame and a way to lay those babies to rest one and for all.

"I remember how his breath continued to slip from his lips in great gray billows as he swung from the end of that rope. The sky behind him was like an open wound, so red." Granny shook her head slowly. "Fear will drive men to do unthinkable things to one another. So will guilt, or love. I was the worst of them all, watching that man die, singing hymns with the others, while the whole time the carcasses of those young 'uns was buried back of my outhouse.

"But things grew better with time. No more missing children, and Ethan grew smart with book-learning, much like you have, dear.

"He was getting to be a fine young man. And handsome, lean and muscled from working hard on our place. It never dawned on me how fast he was becoming a man until just after his seventeenth birthday. That's when I discovered the other way the beast inside him was coming out.

"Seemed his 'twilight poison' wasn't enough for him after a while. I caught the boy rutting with a dog outside one night as the moon was growing full. He needed that sort of release also, something I'd never realized. By the time I caught him with that little pup, he'd already 'bout killed it. Jerked against it so hard, he broke its poor little neck.

"He saw me and threwed the animal down, then ran off into the woods. I just stood there shocked, the pup flopping on the dirt next to my feet.

"Many times after that, I caught him doing that filth. With the pigs, just before he slaughtered them on his wild nights. With

mangy strays. Filth! I couldn't look at the child. He was out of control with his perversions."

"Sins of the flesh are the most despicable sins of all. The beast was coming back out, though I thought I'd subdued it. The thought of the boy fucking those animals revolted me, I tell you."

Lauren unconsciously moved farther from Granny, revolted and frightened by the tale. How she wanted to leave, but wanted, needed to hear more. She needed one small discrepancy in time or place to prove it was all tales.

"The hardest choice I ever had to make was when I decided to let him use me instead.

"A horrible thing for a woman to do with her own child, to spread her legs for him. But tell me, what else could I do? What would you have done?"

"The boy was growing into a man, and to be very honest, I didn't have any male company in those days. I quickly found myself enjoying it.

"I grew to want it from him, and to this day, I believe it brought us closer together. He began sharing things with me, much like when he was very small.

"He wanted me to share the 'twilight poison' with him," she whispered. "And I wanted to have that thing between his legs so bad that I gave in before I ever knewed what I was doing. The twilight poison was euphoria, even more so that the rutting we did on the nights of the full moon. It dulled my dreams, my nightmares. I'd often dreamed I was in Hell. In the back of my mind, I was sure we was both going there for what we had done.

"When the disappearings started again, I didn't try to stop them, just so long as Ethan was cautious. We devoured those little bodies like two hounds split from a pack. And we kissed, the blood sealing our lips together like sticky candy.

"Ain't real sure how I ever came to my senses, but I believe it was more the guilt over the filth we was sharing that weighed on my mind than the lives that were taken. My beloved was leading me down a dark path. And I knowed there was no turning back unless I was rid of him."

She paused a moment, fumbling with her sewing, collecting her

thoughts. Lauren waited silently for her to go on. Finally Granny spoke, a tearing gleaming like a touch of wet silver at the corner of her gray eyes. "I killed the boy on Thanksgiving morning. I remember it because I had a decent meal for us cooking away in the kitchen. It wasn't a full moon, of course; I couldn't wait on one to do it once I'd made up my mind.

"I called him to me, in the front bedroom, which had become ours. Of course you realize we was together all of the time by then, not just on the nights of the full moon. Said, 'Come in here, son, while that fine dinner is cooking. Come keep your mama warm for a little bit.' He didn't need to be asked twice.

"I had a fine silver knife hidden just under the edge of my pillow, something my grand-

daddy had owned in the States' war. I was trembling like a leaf in a tornado, but there was no stopping me then. "I remember the warm feeling of him squirting into me as I plunged the blade into his back. Silver was what would kill a werewolf. Silver piecing the flesh, opening it up, intruding. He looked down at me and I saw I'd brought the change on. The eyes became wicked and yellow, and I knowed he was done for. Yet I wondered if he would live long enough to devour me first. "Then he collapsed on top of me, sighed a tired breath, and was still forever.

"A hell of a thing I did, killing my own flesh like a thing of the wild myself. The guilt was something my heart will always embrace.

"I pulled the ragged curtains of the house and I stayed naked so as not to ruin one of my few dresses. I carved the child up into bits to make certain he was dead. I done it over the kitchen basin. Ah, the smell of that fresh flesh and blood, still warm. It shames me to say it, but it made my mouth water like a hungry little bitch pup. But I didn't dare, did I?" Old Granny rocked back in her chair and Lauren saw a fleeting smile cross her lined face. She felt a chill slip up her back like an icy hand.

"I made out he was one of the disappeared himself.

"I kept his parts in the wash pot next to my bed, so I might read to him at night, as I'd once done. But shortly all that began to rot. Lord, the stench! So, I cleaned his bones and I carved them into ornaments for my Christmas tree. Our Christmases together, those were the best times." Lauren thought of the crude angels she'd admired since childhood. Could those trinkets have been the bones of a long dead uncle? She shivered again and rubbed her bare arms to bring some warmth to them.

"Oh, yes, Dear. Bones. Ivory rubbed to a deep gleam, as smooth as a baby's rosie little mouth. And eventually I dug up the bones of them children Ethan did in. They haunted me. And of course, by that time Mr. Abraham had taken up here. He mentioned something about a patch of corn and pole beans yonder." She nodded toward the henhouse. "I



knowned something had to be done. I set about carving again—trinkets for the house, little figurines and dollies for the children, of angels kneeling to pray, dancing, sleeping.”

Lauren shuddered, her mouth suddenly full of cotton. “I have the one of the angel dancing. You gave it to me for my eighth birthday,” she said quietly.

She remembered getting the figurine—almost yesterday, it seemed—wrapped in blue felt. She kept it in a place of honor, on her nightstand, until she was out of high school. She could still see it there, glimmering bluish silver as the moonlight kissed it through her window. Now, she wanted to cry out, to flee from Granny’s side. How could she live with knowing such things? She was convinced she was no longer hearing the wild ramblings of a decaying mind.

Granny laughed out loud. “The look on your face, child! Hell, it ain’t dirty. I gave the others to your cousins. A gift from old Granny. But none of them really know . . .

“It was a brazen way to be, but I had to protect myself. I would have been hanged, just like the old drifter had been.

“I believe Mr. Abraham always suspected there was something amiss with me, but he was a good man, a gentle man. Shortly after

we was married, he learnt I had a taste for raw flesh. He caught me one day sneaking a bit of pork I was fixin’ to cook.

“During love, he would sometimes allow me to wound him—a small cut on the chest or the underside of his jaw, just to draw the saltiness of his blood. He would kiss the taste from my lips, then pray afterwards for God to forgive our perversions. Sometimes he would weep against my breast for tempting him with the ‘twilight poison.’

“Mr. Abraham’s faith was stronger than his cravings. Or else he never loved the taste as much as me. Once your daddy was born, we stopped the bloodletting all together. I suspect it was to protect the boy more than anything else. Some things can be just too convenient, like plump little boys pulling at your teet.

“Mr. Abraham always insisted on bathing your daddy himself, and dressing him for bed. To look for bite marks, I’m sure. But I wasn’t no animal, and I guarentee you he never found a one,” Granny said, nodding slowly. “Not a one.

“We continued to keep the swine, just as I had for Ethan.”

Lauren threw an uneasy glance into the darkness, toward the small pippen beyond

the henhouse. There was a fat sow out there now, she knew. A young boy from town came several times a week to look after the animal.

“I still get that special craving from time to time.” Granny whispered, leaning forward. She caressed Lauren’s neck with her tissue paper hands. “Sometimes I still need that ‘twilight poison’ just to make the dreams of Hell become a blur.”

The question, as terrible as it was hung at the end of Lauren’s tongue. Exactly how was the filthy animal being used? Was it there to curb Granny’s cravings, or to lure the young boy to the house? Again, deep in the night, a dog yelped a shrill, keening cry. Could the cry be something more than a mere pup barking a warning into the forest?

Granny sighed once again. “Don’t you fret the children, Laurie,” she said, almost snatching the thought from Lauren’s head. “Weren’t your doing, was it?

“A shameful tale, it is, but the grave ain’t no place for secrets.

“The old shouldn’t carry secrets,” she added, barely a whisper. “And I know your little prayers won’t keep me from Hell, but say one for me, if you’ve a mind to. Say one for me and for your Uncle Ethan.” ■



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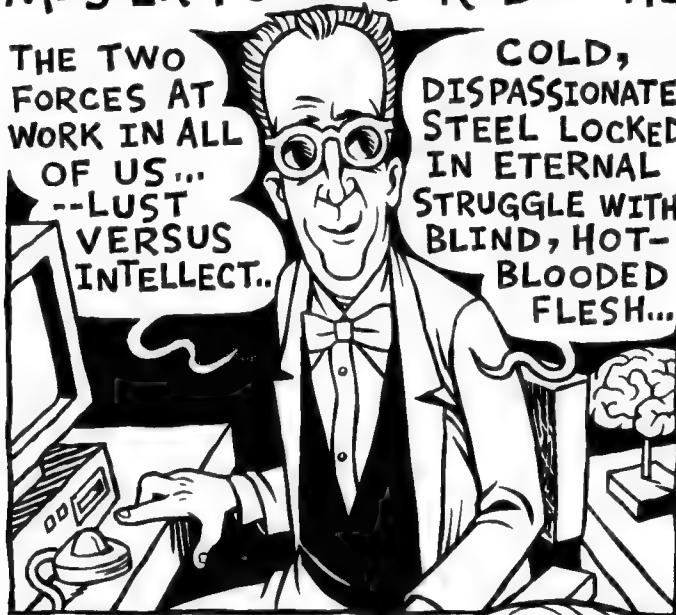
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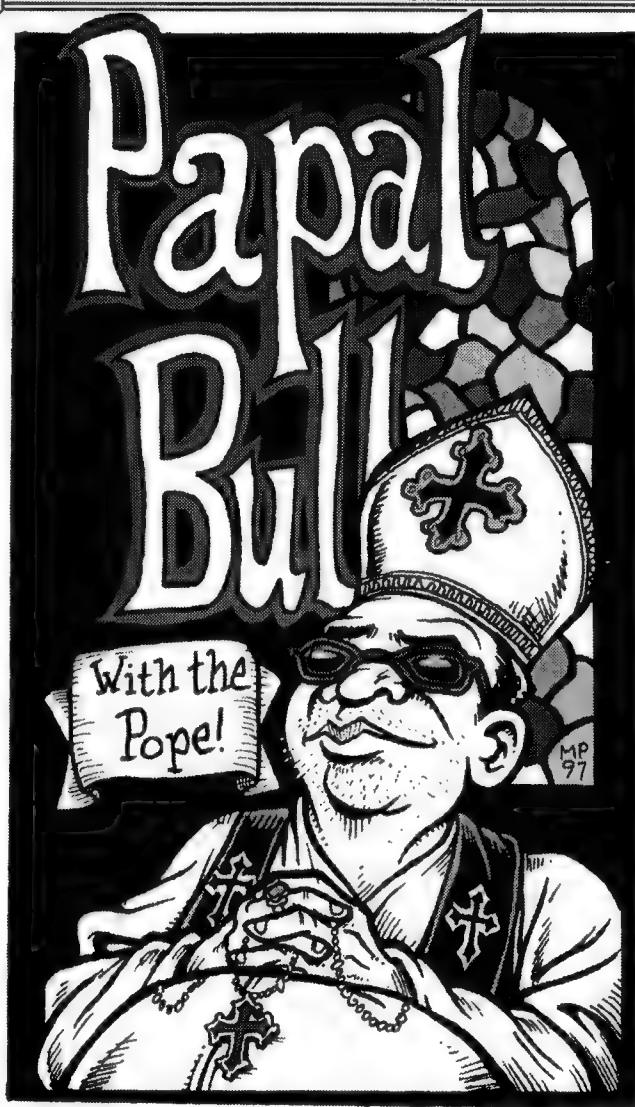


HOLD STILL, YOU SWEATY
LITTLE PRIMATE---I
WANT TO FEED YOU
YOUR OWN
OVERACTIVE
GONADS!



HEY ROBOT-MAN--WHY
DON'T YOU LEAVE PEOPLE
ALONE AN' MIND YOUR BUSINESS?





Buon giorno, my children. As we head toward that holiest time of year - no, not my Birthday - but the feast day of the baby Jesus, I find I have much to tell you. But before I begin, I must, as my sacred duty, urge you to imitate the Christ and treat all whom cross your path with the respect and love they deserve. Save for those celebrating the demise of the Notre Dame football team and the public humiliation of their embattled leader Bob Davies. Shun these deservedly, soon-to-be-excommunicated ones as they know (very much like Coach Davies) not what they do. Our Lady will, as She always does, rise Phoenix-like from the ashes and once again take Her rightful place among the United States college football elite. Doubt not. Just Hail! Hail! Old Notre Dame! And wake up the echoes cheering Her name! Even if mocked and reviled among the apostates you generously choose to call your friends . . . Now back to business. The Pope's business. The real Pope. He is back and is not, as erroneously reported in the previ-

ous issue, sleeping with the fishes. So here it is my flock: the Pope is a wrestling fan. A huge wrestling fan. He subscribes to many wrestling sheets and exchanges many letters with mat fans. From all four corners of the globe. So when there is evil perpetrated against this sport of Kings, His Holiness is on the ready to put His followers on alert. The latest outrage against those pursuing this most coraggioso of occupations has taken place in northern Virginia, home of freedom fighters George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. We were originally informed that some misguided Old Dominion politicians had forced a cowardly high school principale into canceling a show by a circuit calling itself the **INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING ASSOCIATION**. This temporarily caused the Association to suspend operations as it had promised much money to big name stars like Axel Rotten and Johnny Gunn and the call girls who walk around with the oversized cardboard signs. Upon further investigation however, His Holiness discovered that said principale backed down because of a single turban-wearer complaining about the legendary Iron Sheik being on the card. A towel-head who just so happened to be Iranian and therefore, in all likelihood, since he is living in the United States and not Iran, a former strong-arm policier of the Shah. In other words, a fascista making big noises in a lame effort to keep his standing in the local Arab community. Unbelievably, the vile Iranian's efforts were supported by the local press including the reactionary-parading-as-liberal Washington Post. The Fourth Estates's unholy pogrom nearly put the IPWA out of business but thanks to the screams of former IPWA champion Cueball Carmichael the wrestling organization landed triumphantly on its feet. Bravo! Bravissimo! We must applaud the well-muscled and courageous Cueball whose cries of protest and disgust prevented a diseased Mohammedan and several, how you say, straight-arrow newspaper editors from imposing their will on an innocent group of alcoholic homophobes . . . And speaking of the squared circle, He must inform His badly aging readers of a sensational sheet calling itself **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO.. ..?**, a labor of love stuffed con interviews with and features on the great and not-so great retired grapplers. Curiosa as to whatever became of men like Dr. Jerry Graham or Lou Thesz? Well wonder no more as editor Scott Teal and his crackerjack research team sit down with mannish boys such as these and get them to reveal all. Lavishly illustrated with columns and reminiscences on defunct promotions, reviews of the better sheets and important libros and a comprehen-

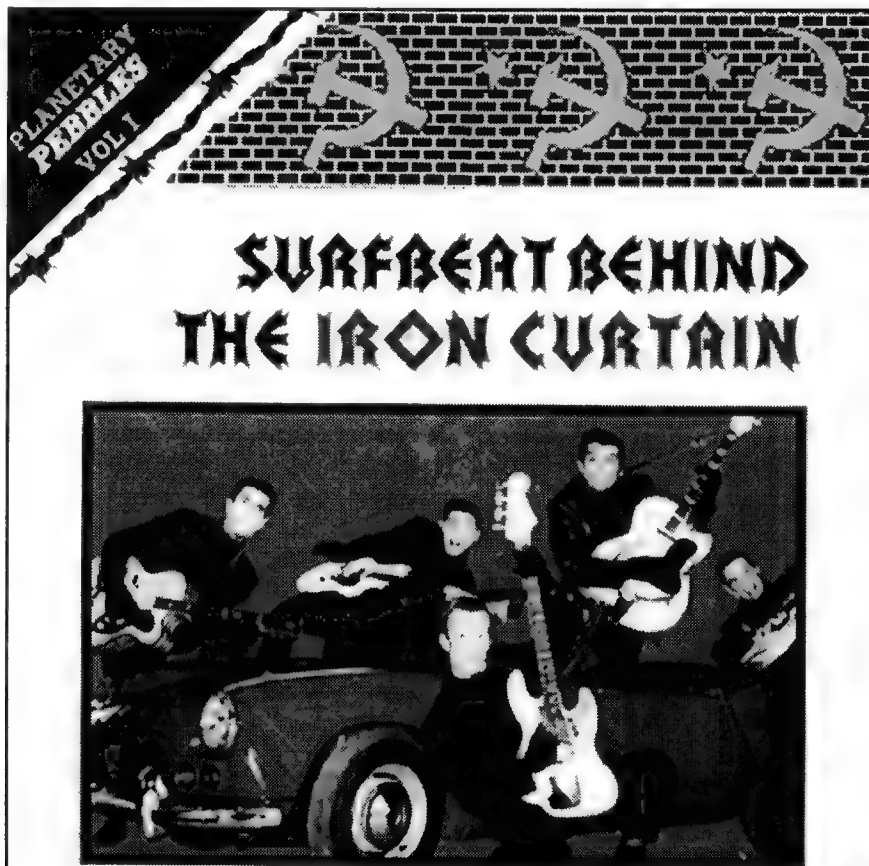
sive obituary section. Send \$5 for a sample copy to WHT, Box 2781, Hendersonville, TN 37077-2781) . . . She was so bellissima: those heavily-kohled doe eyes; that helmet of reddish-gold hair; the lusty voice. When she whispered, it was of love, love beyond desire, love in impossible positions, love more than love, love that dare not speak its name. And when she let herself open up, the listener felt things he knew he should not. All styles were her styles: folk, Motown, Memphis-soul, Eurotrash cabaret, Merseybeat, MOR, French ballades. Veritably, the proper Catholic girl Mary Isabel Catherine Bernadette O'Brien was POP. To the Pope, she will always be Mary, but you who enjoy the music will know her better as **DUSTY SPRINGFIELD**. Mercury records has finally seen that it is good to release her first United States of America compilation. It is three compact of discs with many bella pitturas and it traces the career of the leggendario Dusty from her beginnings with The Springfields to more recent work with those men of sus-

spect sexual practices who call themselves the Pet Shop Boys. With many songs that were not allowed to be heard in your country . . . And speaking of good Catholics, the Pontiff would be remiss in not telling you of a real Bohemian toiling in virtual oscurita, Jeff Bagato. He publishes **MOLE** and truly, it is as Jeff says, a magazine of the nonconformist music, outsider art and culture that for Americans is underground. Molte, molte reviews of eccentrico sound-makers and conversaciones with some who make such sounds. Also discussiones with makers and collectors of things. Some like pop soda cans He was under the impression was garbage. Truly strange and truly wonderful (\$4.00 to Box 2482, Merrifield, VA 22116) . . . Visionary genios, Tom Weisser and his wife Yuko, have just released the first volume in their



guide to outsider Nippon film: **JAPANESE CINEMA ENCYCLOPEDIA**. Soon to be followed by two tomes on their sex film. The initial installment deals solely with horror, fantasy and science fiction. Your Pontiff has seen many of these movies and normally would prohibit His children from even considering viewing such vile creations as Rapeman or Entrails of a Virgin but our auttores' intelligent and penetrating analysis of such excrement has even Him questioning His firmly ingrained notions of beauty, art and the value of uninhibited expression. And questioning not at all the married couple's evaluation of the less objectionable offerings. (\$19.95 to Vital Books, Box 16-1919, Miami, FL 33116) My flock write to me about many of the cheap cable-access television in their communities. Many in NuevoYork tell

me about the Dame D'Arcy show. He has seen it and has to say, she is, how you say, retarded. Plus she has the pointy ears. The sure mark of the Devil. In the town founded by Lord Baltimore there is something better. The **ATOMIC TV PARTY**. With naked and perverso rock bands and Jim Rose Circus Sideshow and idolators making sex acts in bathroom stalls. They put it on tape and it is sinful but enjoyable because it is obvious all are shamed by their actions. Both those in front and behind the camera. Sixty minutes of sleaze for less than ten dollars. (Atomic, 1018 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD/Call (301)783-7774 for zip code) . . . The amiable lunatics at the Bomp records not content with mining the wilds of America for the garage rock have now begun to raid the vaults of my bretheren in Europe. The Bomps are



ing excellence? And how this could lead to the foolishness that was Sgt. Peppers? (Bomp, Box 7112, Burbank, CA 91510) The Americans. Oh how they love the monsters. They even, as with Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, elect them as their Presidents. Or put them on their postage stamps. It is surpassing strange, no? So they are, naturalmente best, at building the horror houses and rides. To find out where the most monstrous are existing in all the landone can go to either **HAUNTED ATTRACTION** (Box 491, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29567) or **FRIGHT TIMES** (Boneyard Productions, Box 4324, Shrewsbury, MA 01545). Personally, watching C-SPAN is horrifying enough for your mentor but for those in denial of reality these publications are marvelouso guidas . . . So my children, my flock, that is all for this month for me. I will see you at midnight mass, if you know what is good for you. †

calling this new series **PLANETARY PEBBLES** and their initial effort is **SURFBEAT BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN**. While the Pope must stress that Italy, the UK and Japan were not Warsaw-pact countries, this is nevertheless a, as collectors speak it, a "must-have" for aficionados of beat and surf. Truly that these land-locked and godless places could make such a joyful noise is almost beyond The Pontiff's comprehension. Almost. As nothing is truly beyond the ken of the Vicar of Christ. Capisce? I thought so. . . Also on Bomp are five volumes of **FREAK BEAT** which have the English doing primitivista beat things. In the 60s. The time when the drugs and the sex were rampant. And cheap. So we must ask how could these young people, tumescent and high, make such atavistic music of such unsurpass-





Ozzy has received many letters, mostly from his parents, asking why, after putting in three years at Wake Forest Law School, he has not elected to toil for a big firm and make lots of money. And Oz's response - aside from dreadful grades making this an impossibility - is this: working for a living is a fool's game. Yeah, Oz could make six figures like so many of his friends but to what end? The world is a big place with a lot to see and do. And when you're allowed to pull down six figures in the legal field you're not going to get to see and do much at all. How can you doing 9 to 9 six days a week? Sure, you cut the mustard, you'll make partner, get two hour lunches and three weeks vacation. Gee, thanks. Books go unread, symphonies unheard, ladies lost. To hell with that noise. Besides, even the most undemand-

ing jobs require attendance five days a week at eight hours per. Look up slavery in the dictionary; that may not be the exact definition but it's damn close. Man is born free but everywhere is in chains. Oz's remedy: find a comfortable job, one giving you a private office, and use it to fulfill your dreams. If this isn't possible, eat properly, keep yourself in good shape and use the added energy living right gives you to do what you want and need to do. Either this or marry rich. Just don't surrender to the idea of a home in the suburbs and a weekend as reward for zombie soldiering Monday thru Fridays. Be always drunken. On wine, poetry, or with virtue, as you please, just be not the martyred slaves of time. Baudelaire said that. He died before he hit fifty but so what. He lived and lives still. Read on, what follows is important...

Ozzy's impeccable, fool-proof rating system:



el stinko, flat upon opening



barely worth interrupting a good piss for



ok, but leave the stereo on in the background



now we're talking not bad



hot shit, skip the x-files for this



who needs beer? A/V geek heaven

SCORE

Originally released in 1972, Radley Metzger's *Score* was given its 25th anniversary re-release in the summer of 1997 at NYC's Cinema Village theater. Although directed by a legendary smut pioneer like Metzger (director of such early porn chic classics as *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* and *Camille 2000*), *Score* struck Ozzy as more in the nature of a good, low-budget erotic film dealing with the serious issues of the day than your typical wank-a-thon. The flick has only slightly more nudity than

many features made at the same time e.g. *Last Tango in Paris*, *Shampoo* or *Women in Love*. (Of course, none of those films featured two men actually sucking each others cocks, either, but we're talking quantity now, not, uh, quality.)

Despite the disappointment that might be felt by those hetero crank-spankers grown accustomed to today's screen-filling pink, jizz-on-her-face porn, *Score* is a lot of fun and worth catching either at the revival house or on your videocassette. It's interesting, not only as an excellent

example of early contemporary porn, but as a campy '70s relic. The movie would make a perfect double bill with *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (but should be screened first; *Beyond* is so over-the-top it would overshadow the subtler *Score*).

Based on the Off-Broadway play of the same name, both play and screenplay were written by Jerry Douglas who fills his *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* narrative with exceedingly witty dialogue. Our plot: swinging couple Elvira and Jack are happy-go-lucky sexual predators who like to keep

score (get it?) of their conquests. Their latest target is the cute, but square, couple of Eddie and Betsy, whom they've invited over for dinner. They get the repressed couple very stoned and begin their psychosexual little games . . .

Metzger utilizes interesting camera work and clever editing (especially on the bisexual seduction scenes) to help disguise the movie's theatrical origins. He was also lucky enough to get his paws on a cast of good actors although Metzger today admits to regretting his refusal to hire Sylvester Stallone who'd been in the stage version.

However, Oz's biggest surprise was his rediscovery of Lynn Lowry. He'd previously seen Lynn, a former Playboy bunny, in David Cronenberg's *They Came From Within* (she plays the hero's girlfriend; the one who gives the crazy and awesome "I had a dream where I made love to an old man last night, and he was sick and diseased. And it was beautiful!" speech) and George Romero's *The Crazies*. Ozzy has always dug her sloe-eyed, skinny, quasi-hippie, perky good-looks, so catching her romping in the raw in *Score* was a revelation. And isn't it just adorable the way she nervously nibbles on her lower lip or drags a finger through a strand of her hair? She's so cute! Still, it's her core of naughtiness that makes her even cuter. Like a Brady girl gone bad. But in a good way.



SCREAMING MIMI

Wowoo, did Oz go ga-ga over Swedish superstructure Anita Ekberg in this unheralded, near-noir treasure. After getting out of an insane asylum, exotic dancer Anita goes to work at a club called El Madhouse(!) where the Red Norvo Trio (a foursome!!) play and hostess Gypsy Rose Lee destroys "*Put The Blame On Mame*." Oh, and someone with a fetish - a "daring" topic to discuss by name in the Fifties - is going around stabbing the strippers.

Great photography, lots of the requisite snappy dialogue (e.g., a man raises a glass to a snoopy reporter and says "To your ill health.") and, best of all, Anita performs her entire bump-and-grind number TWICE. And where else are you gonna see a guy attempt to save his life by reciting the Gettysburg Address?

A whodunit that will fool you; a bleak, totally twisted ending; a delicious Danish yours truly would love to eat for breakfast; general sickness throughout:

Ozzy gives this five cans - four for the pic

itself and one extra for Anita's astounding Swedish meatballs.



FIRE DOWN BELOW

Ozzy say, "Porn good." And when he's offered a chance to view hardcore porn made by Ray Dennis Steckler - the genius behind *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living And Became Mixed-Up Zombies* - Ozzy say, "Must do."

If you are familiar with any of Steckler's stuff, you won't be surprised that *Fire Down Below* is not your standard "pizza man

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gets lucky" stroke saga. For instance, rather than a generic blonde tart, the main character is a fat, homicidal, voyeuristic weird-beard who's likely the worst-hung actor ever to drop drawers in XXX. And, being the smut is Steckler-scripted, of course there's a "trademark" strangulation scene. Yet, despite the above, this skin show isn't really a "roughie!"

Straight stuff, Steckler was a damn good pornographer. His smut scenes featured attractive, enthusiastic horndogs; were well-lit and filmed; and put the lead in Oz's pink pencil. That makes them better than half of the plastitted coke ho crap released today, even if the Golden Age flix do look somewhat dated.

Tempted to check of FDB? Well, Alpha Blue offers it and a second Steckler smoker on a single-cassette double feature for only \$20! Order now before a perv strangles you. (Video Vault for rental by mail)

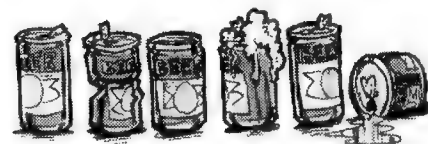


BREAKDOWN

Ho Boy! When Hollywood does the B-movie right it really does the B-movie right. A flick like this makes sitting through garbage like *Three Days In The Valley* and *Face/Off* worthwhile. A simple story, deftly plotted, believably acted by personable human beings: Is that too much to ask? Ozzy doesn't think so. Here we find Kurt Russell and Kathy Quinlan leaving the cold clime of

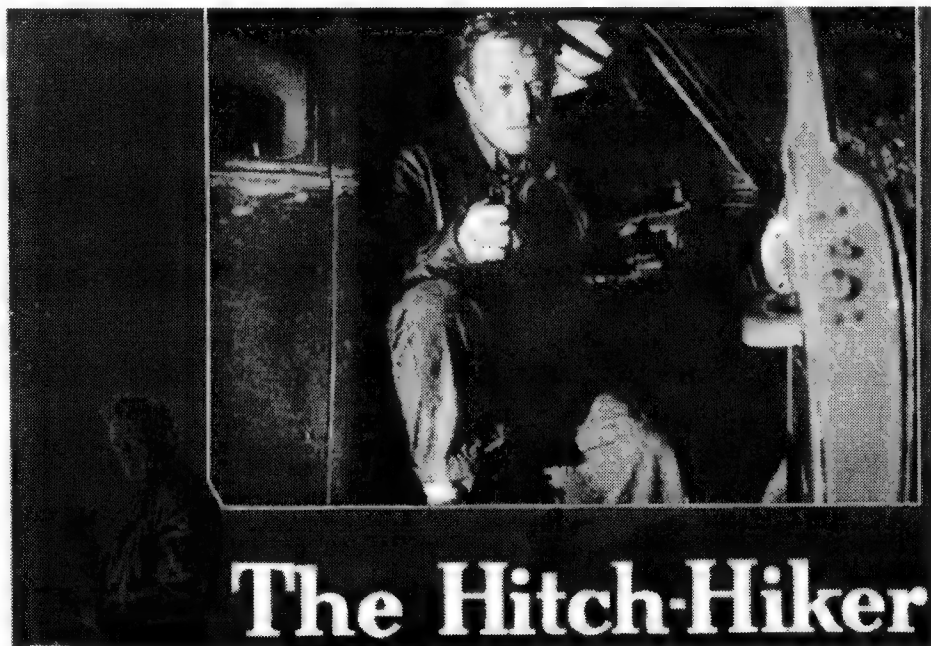
Massachusetts to start a new life on the coast. In the middle of what looks like Arizona, Kurt nearly runs into a pick-up which has pulled in front of him seemingly from nowhere. Stopping to get gas a few miles down the road the driver of the pick-up pulls in and tries to start a fight but Kurt defuses the situation. Right after leaving the station, however, Kurt and Kathy's lovely new red van stalls out. Leaving them at the mercy of, you guessed it, the idiot in the pick-up. A gentle soul in an eighteen wheeler (J.T. Walsh) scares the maniac off and, at Kathy's suggestion, agrees to take her to a truck stop five miles down the road to call for help while Kurt stays behind to watch the van. O.K. Kurt's waiting. And waiting. And waiting. Bored, he shimmies under the van and discovers someone has messed with the wiring. He puts the blue and reds together. Gets the van started. Pulls into the truck stop.

Walks in: deadly silence. No one has seen his wife. No one wants to talk to him. No one really wants to look at him . . . Now it begins. A slow spiral into nightmare. Where questions lead to answers which are not answers. Where everything is as it should be but is not somehow. Yes, Oz is being obtuse. That's because this is a B-movie, remember, and story is everything. So just take Mr. Fide's word for it. You're in for the ride of your life (or at least the last few days). Disconnect the phone. Pull down the shades. And make sure you have at least a six in the fridge. You're gonna need it. (Video Vault)



THE HITCH-HIKER

Kino Films has begun to release a number of flicks directed by Ida



Lupino in the '50s, crowning her "Queen of the Bs" in the process. Which she may have been as she was just about the only woman directing second features during Eisenhower's reign. The Hitcher, is the picture for which she is best remembered (aside from The Trouble With Angels), a taut, harrowing tale of two innocents who give a ride to a psychopathic killer on the lam. Well, the guys - Frank Lovejoy and Edmond O'Brien - aren't exactly "innocent" having told their wives they were planning to go fishing in the Arizona mountains when they really intended to head to Mexico to pick up a couple of hookers. Instead they pick-up William Talman and a whole heap of trouble. Talman, you see, is not your ordinary, garden-variety psychopath; he's a vicious, sadistic, squinty-eyed monster, the living embodiment of evil. Right off the bat he lets Lovejoy and O'Brien know he's going to kill them then spends the rest of the film psychologically abusing the pair and airily debating with himself whether the time is ripe to rid himself of his companions. Which Talman never quite gets around to doing. It's not that he's enjoying himself exactly; in some twisted way, he's trying to bond, to gain respect. But because he's insane he doesn't really know how to. In fact, Talman doesn't really know how to do anything. He's a twisted, frightened animal holding on to a gun like a lifeline. Less than half alive, he's taking his new pals on a journey to nowhere. Where oblivion awaits. By the time

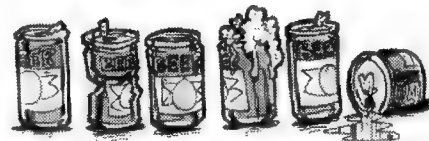
Lupino's seventy-one minute exercise in brutality unspools, the viewer, much like O'Brien and Lovejoy, is too exhausted to care what happens. For they, and we, have died a dozen small deaths along the way.



THE KISS OF HER FLESH

You want sick, stoopit, and sleazy? Here 'tis: the final chapter in the notorious Findlays' (they made Snuff) Flesh Trilogy in which our anti-hero Richard Jennings continues his ignoble quest to rid the world of women. How he proposes to do this when knocking them off one at a time is beyond Oz but then I suppose we're supposed to view him as insane. Certainly one would have to view a man who chooses to murder hot, buxom women rather than make love to them as deranged but still, do they all have to be so lovely? And just how does one poison one's semen without doing harm to oneself? Or continue to pose as a gynecologist in a small town when all your patients keep turning up dead? Or die in the first installment of this saga and return for the next two installments? So many questions. So few answers. Here's the most pertinent one: Who the hell paid money to see sick nonsense like this in the sixties? Aside from John Wayne Gacy and Jeffrey Dahmer that is. In any case, this is something of a landmark work

in misogyny and must viewing for those with a pronounced mistrust of feminism. Intellectuals with similar misgivings are advised to dip into Bram Dijkstra's penetrating study of the development of anti-feminine platitudes, Idols Of Perversity. Well-adjusted types like yours truly are advised to sit back, pop open a beer and be prepared to be shocked and amazed at this remarkably inept exercise in audacity.



FUN

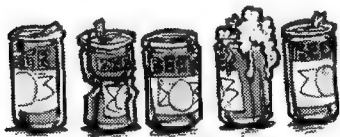
Although pushing itself as an exploitation film, this flick about two psychopathic teenage chicks is more of an artsy exploration of the banality of evil. Or the banality of stupidity. Oz is having trouble deciding which as our two gals aren't exactly Rhode Scholars and they don't really do anything until the end of the movie. And Mr. Fide still isn't sure he saw them stab a little old lady about sixty times. It seemed so unreal in light of the events leading up to it. So out of character for these pathetic, helpless creatures. And yet. And yet.

The end of Fun is actually the beginning of our story which is set in a detention center for violent juvenile offenders. Shortly after we buzz through the gate, we are introduced to the girl's mousey caseworker and a young, pompous magazine journalist seeking to cash in on what is apparently le crime du

jour. It is through their interviews with each of the troubled teenagers (they've been separated and placed in different cells) that we learn about them and the events leading up to their depraved act of brutality.

The scenes in the detention are filmed in grainy black and white giving them a cinema verite feel and providing an effective contrast to the brightly colored narrative, making the latter appear all the more illusory. And the performances of the leads combine just the right amounts of innocence and deranged eccentricity; these gals are kooky but still kind of spooky. You see that there's an eerie vacuousness at the heart of their frivolity.

Le Cahier du Cinema plaudits aside, what Oz liked about the film was its refusal to pander to the sensational. We are shown a murder without drama. We watch two comely young women in all manner of intimate situations and remain unaroused. We listen to tales of incest and suffering and are unmoved. Something is going on here. Nothing is going on here. Why is the caseworker bothering? Who wants to read the journalist's story? Still, we watch. Fascinated and appalled.



KISS OR KILL

An Australian noir feature not nearly as good as the critics would have you believe but nev-

ertheless one that manages to hold your interest despite its lack of nudity and almost total absence of violence. Our story centers on the luscious Nikki (Frances O'Connor) whose work-life entails picking up rich men in bars, drug-ging them once in their rooms, then letting her boyfriend Al (Matt Day) in to aid her in fleecing them. Unfortunately, Nikki gives one of her johns too many mickeys one night and he shuffles off to join the choir invisible. Nikki, none too disturbed by this turn of events, makes off with the victim's briefcase. In the briefcase, the couple find a videotape of a retired football star doing a chicken hawk number. Which means, in movie reality, the duo are shortly to have not only the police on their tail but the pederast as well. Which also means that the film must also become a road movie. And in a road movie we expect our heroes to meet all manner of weird people. We do



Stately Wayne Manor, Ivan Lerner, John Oliver, Dominick Salemi

but here's the twist: the weirdest person turns out to be Nikki, who may or may not be murdering all the people who make nice her and Al. This is a nice twist but in a story this slight and characters even slighter we need a little more bang for our buck. Still, the acting is rather good, O'Connor unforgettable, the bleak setting of the Australian countryside effectively employed and the denouement absolutely priceless.





Audio Depravation

dirk fubar (df)
james maclaren (jm)
ivan lerner (il)

dom salemi (ds)
john fortunato (jf)
mark poutenis (mp)

brian hodge (bh)
jeff bagato (jb)
jim schoene (js)

THE BLASTERS

American Music

Originally released on Rolling Rock Records in 1980 with less than 2,000 LPs pressed, *American Music* has just been re-issued for all - but a few - to hear for the first time. On this, their first album, The Blasters of Downey, Calif., played their rock 'n' roll/C&W/blues hybrid with a genuine feel for the music, largely because they were schooled by masters. Consider this: John Lee Hooker was a neighbor, and New Orleans sax giant Lee Allen was later a bandmate. So things could hardly have turned out wrong. Moreover, Phil Alvin sang in a voice nearly as big as Tennessee Ernie Ford, his brother Dave was a gifted songwriter and stinging guitarist, and the rhythm section of John Bazz and Bill Bateman was solid but restrained. Though four songs here were later re-recorded for subsequent Blasters' platters, the originals here have a raw fury that the later versions lack. While other neo-rockabilly didn't come close to recreating the sounds of their influences, *American Music* is the real deal. If I didn't know better, I'd swear this came out of Sun Studios in 1956. (Hightone) df

BLUE STINGRAYS

Surf-N-Burn

Surf music. For people who have been hit in the head with their board. Kinda gobbyslow if you know what I mean. Whammy bar and tremolo prevail. No vocals, fortunately. If there was a way I could double, or even triple, the speed of my cd player, this might qualify as da kine. But I can't. So we'll just have to save this one for the hocus "luau" party in the split-level ranch number thirty miles outside of town, when all the bosses show up from work with their wing tips and Hawaiian shirts. They'll eat this shit up like it was complimentary martinis. (Epitaph) jm

BOUNCING BALLS

Bouncing Balls

On the first two cuts on this sometimes-wow, sometimes-all-too-whatever-these-guys-believe-to-be-now debut, lead singer and songwriter Don Hedeker sounds like he's trying to pump himself up. Little wonder, as he's attempting to make the transition from the experi-

mental artsy new-wave Algebra Suicide to rugged rock.

Stylistically, the songs are reminiscent of mid-period Dream Syndicate: catchy melodies in the lower register, raggedhopeful vocals, incendiary guitar figures and wild burning guitar solos. Which isn't such a bad thing; but far too often Hedeker sounds like he's trying too hard and this



sinks a number of otherwise heartfelt and clever compositions. Still, the band has an inventive and agile six-stringer and that along with Hedeker's undeniable intelligence make Bouncing Balls a combo to watch. Maybe. (Box 803664, Chicago, IL 60680-3664) ds

RALPH CARNEY

Ralph Sounds

Ah, Dada! Work under the aegis of the nonsensical and you're given license to do whatever you like. Nothing is true and everything is permitted. Play lots of instruments on which you are not trained. Sing, or wail or shout or what you will. Discard melody. Toy with tone and texture and rhythm. Jettison structure in favor of spontaneity. Just keep it short. Which Carney, who's worked with Tin Huey, The B-52's and Tom Waits, does. The result, and the only possible result, is hilarity and entertainment. And the inevitable cries of genius. (Birdman, 1409 W. Magnolia, Burbank, CA 91506) ds

CRAMPS

Big Beat From Badsville

Ya know, Poison Ivy is really starting to annoy us. Whether plying her trade in concert or posing on the album covers she's always dressed to kill yet almost preternaturally careful not to expose any of her important parts. Why is this? Doesn't she know everyone is dying to see her teardrop-shaped breasts, her wild devilish bush? If Lux can drop his panties on stage certainly Ivy can flash something for her many fans every now and then. We know she's playing off 50s men's mag stereotypes and pulp fiction covers but enough is enough. Which is what so many unhappy strappazzones and soi disant admirers are shouting these days whenever a new Cramps' release hits the streets. Which we don't even pretend to understand as Lux & Ivy have never really turned out a bad record. Oh sure, some are better than others, but how does one grow tired of ghoulish, tarty rockabilly and trailer-park trash garage rock? How does one dismiss a combo that sounds like



they'd do anything, anything for a rare Charlie Feathers or Sonny Burgess 45? Naughty things. Nasty things. Things that would hurt AND feel good. C'est impossible, non? So you can buy *Big Beat* and feel safe and hip in doing so. Besides almost every song is about S-E-X. Naughty sex. Nasty sex. Sex that hurts and feels good. And even the few cuts which lack memorable hooks have something to recommend them: an interesting turn of phrase, a fey come-on from Lux, an abandoned and poisonous guitar bit. We just wish the package had included revealing photos of Ivy. Nasty photos. Naughty photos. Photos that . . . (Epitaph) ds

CRY OF LOVE

Diamonds and Debris

Yer basic southern power trio with a fourth as a vocalist. No truck tires, nor cheatin' hearts. And a damn good thing for that, too. Just plain old honest rock and roll for the guys in Hepzibah, GA who're content to merely roll 'em and smoke 'em and leave all

the fancy shit to some lawyer's kid. A worthy addition to your collection and a necessity when taking that long drive down to Dothan, Alabama. (Columbia) jm

WADE CURTIS & THE RHYTHM ROCKERS

Bright Lights

Little Duane Theodore De Santo had no business, really, aspiring to rock n roll stardom. Crippled from birth, he was confined to a wheelchair. Compounding the injustice Duane had a congenital club deformity resulting in stub arms turned inward and backward. Undaunted, Duane rigged a steel guitar with four E-strings and one from a banjo, made some short steel rods for each hand, and went out to conquer the world . . . Which unfortunately, he didn't do. But he became pretty popular in Buffalo before he went totally insane and migrated to Memphis where, after a decade or so as a small time record impresario, he became a professional wrestling manager. Calling himself Master

Curtis and adorning himself in gold wigs and flounced shirts, the Master would chase opponents in a motorized wheelchair and after beating them senseless with his black lacquered "walking stick" would handcuff them, dazed and bleeding, to the turnbuckle. With the aid of Curtis' former singer Dixie Dee (a professional grappler and bodybuilder) the good folks at Norton have unearthed a whole treasure trove of sleazy r&b and rockabilly bits of business. The cuts with Dee, who was an earnest but rather bland singer, are nothing to write home about; but the majority of *Bright Lights* features Curtis' odd, disquieting instrumentals: two to two and a half-minute blasts of dementia stuffed to the gills with eerie sax, our hero's unusual Duane Eddy six-string homages and hot hot hot pumping rhythms. Sadly, our inside sources tell us, the Master passed away just as he was planning to make a return to the squared circle as The Thalidomide Kid. (Norton) ds

MARTIN DENNY

Quiet Village/The Enchanted Sea

Quiet Village's release in 1950-something was necessitated by the surprising success of Denny's *Exotica* lp and the eponymous single. Although pop instrumental works had their fair share of success in preceeding decades, the Fifties saw . . . Right! You could care less. Still, *Quiet Village* is the quintessential Denny work thanks to its lilting melodies and their relegation to near irrelevancy courtesy of the delightful overuse of bird calls and theme-park jungle sounds. The racist Japonaiserie of a number of the compositions is also a marvelous corrective for those who today trumpet the universality and bonhomie of Denny's "vision." A must, nevertheless, for any Tiki-themed pool party. As for *The Enchanted Sea*, well, let Mr. Denny tell it: "This album came about as a result of our purchase of an overpriced thatch hut on one of those Hawaiian islands. It had a spectacular view, I suppose, for those who care about such things. I just liked the fact that it was always warm enough to

drink outside. Guests claimed they could see Koko Head or some such nonsense in the distance.

Whatever. Incoming waves broke against the cliff and the ensuing spray, when not drenching everything within shouting distance, fell into a splash-swimming pool a native had dug from the lava rock basin. When my alcoholic producer saw this he was so moved he spilled his Mai Tai all over his Hawaiian

print shirt and declared, 'Martin, this is the enchanted sea and that's what will be the name of your next recording.' I pitched my empty beer into the sea and said, 'Yeah, okay, fine. You ready for another?' (Scamp) ds

DEUTSCHMARK BOB AND THE DEFICITS

Bush Hog 'N Man

Johnny Cash meets Commander Cody and they both take really cheap acid cut with a lot of strychnine. Musically quite proficient from a technical point of view, but why did they decide to send the vocals in live, by cell-phone, when they were in the studio putting this thing together? Either that or the money ran out right before they got to the microphone part of the budget. Dunno! Take this thing to Tallahassee and my guess is that they'll love it down at the local feed-and-seed. Just don't tell 'em about the acid, ok? (Crypt) jm

EAT STATIC

Science of the Gods

Get up on your feet honey! Oh, stop! We want you to dance, sugar. Dance to a duo who's been doing this electronica thing since 1990. And appears to have finally seen the light. Yes, we have the simple rhythms and looped synthetic riffs, my darlings, but the volume has been pumped-up to exquisite levels and the beats have been made hard and proud. For hard and proud dancing. Oh my, of course it's repetitive, what dance



music is not, sweetness, but there's so much sonic frippery here you'll be beside yourselves. These adorable young boys are polished knob twirlers and they know how to hold you mind while you're sashaying your behind. Clever too how they slightly mutate things in a track so that what you finish with is just a little different from what you started with. Oh my, honey, that's just like sex, isn't it. I mean, isn't it? Oh, stop! (Mammoth) ds

GUITAR WOLF

Planet Of The Wolves

This loud, very loud, discordant and noisy Japanese punk band

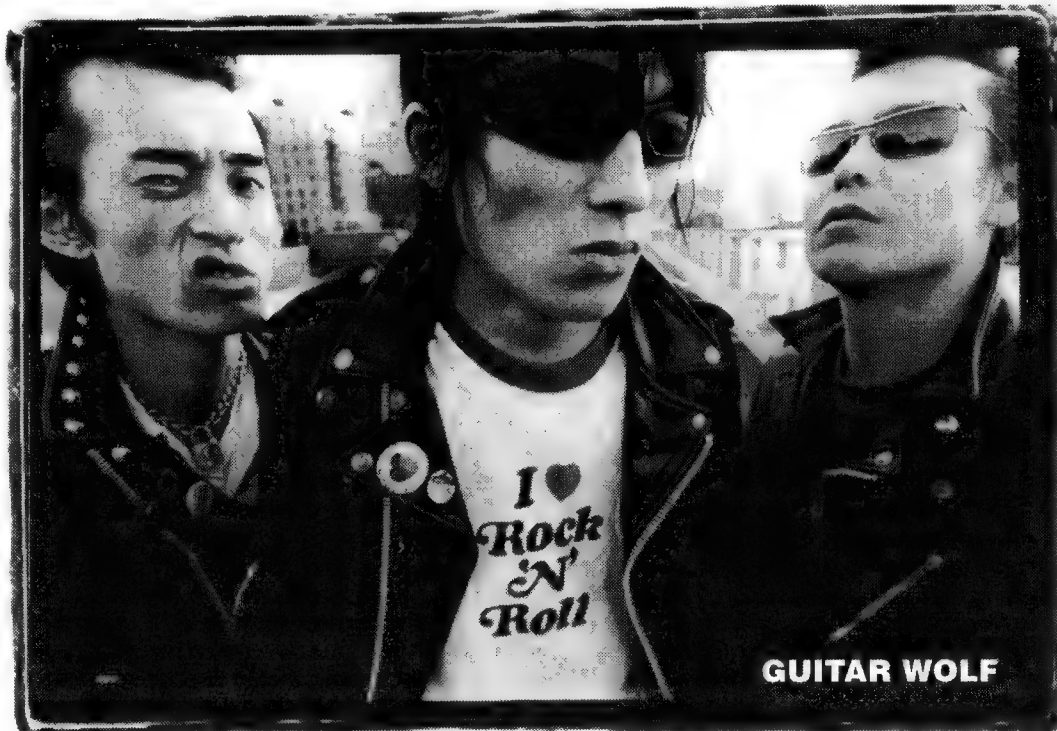
have apparently decided that's writing tuneful blasts of nonsense is not enough. No! Now they want the round eyes to understand them. So they've given us lyrics with this, their latest release. Thus, what sounded like "*She no gedda wow tomos*" we are now supposed to believe is, in actuality "*GeRo GeRo GeRo GeRo-Pee.*" I'm not sure I buy this. I think it's all part of some master plan. And it has something to do with this being the fiftieth anniversary of the alien crash-landing at Roswell, New Mexico. It just has to be. How else to explain all those references to Mars and blasting off and flying motor-

bikes? Or the fact that these Wolves' version of "*Satisfaction*" makes Devo's sound like a faithful cover? (Matador) ds

HANDSOME

Handsome

Hey, pretend I'm not some schmuck you've never met, pretend I'm your buddy, the one you always go out drinking with, the one who's records you always borrow and tape so you don't have to buy anything. I'm asking you to trust me. I'm telling you to buy this record by some ex-Brooklynites called Handsome. This album is one of those truly wonderful gems that just appears one day. No hype, no p.r., no one told you about it (well, I am now, but no one told me), it just happened. I was listening to some half-assed college radio station out of Jersey that shall go nameless (they still think there will be an honest to God return of Motley Crue to the pantheon of great American recording artists) and between Judas Priest tracks came this out-of-place, really wonderful ditty called "*Ride Down*". I'll tell you, that damn song was only three quarters of the way through before I knew the whole thing by heart. Could sing the whole thing. Not like that insanely catchy



Chumbawumba nazi mind torture that invades it's way into your skull uninvited, but just an impeccably crafted hard rock song. A little bit like the Deftones with the melodic, almost dreamy approach to metal (metal, hard rock, whatever you call shit these days that isn't "alternative" but isn't Biohazard either), but sans screaming binges and explosive bursts simply for the sake of

THE HOLY COWS

Blueberrie

Chelsea, Michigan's Holy Cows make volatile, guitar-driven rumbler harnesses to densely amplified sonic production and vintage studio gear. Closer to rural rig-rock than honky tonk, this expanded quartet get downright feisty on the well-oiled Confederate rawk opener "Punched A Friend" and the Replacements-like "How's Your

and societal losers. Not since Doug E. Fresh caught the rap community off guard with his Inspector Gadget-themed nightmare The Show has someone captured the imagination of the Yo-MTV rap crowd with such wilfully inane garishness. A little more consistency over this hour-long set and these masked clowns would have thrown down a classic. But this ain't a bad debut. (Island) jf

tet of their own kids forcing the younglings during the post-op phase to listen to the Door's "The End." A lot. A decade later, here's Kadura, with their own epic, art-noise take on elevating your standard rock band to apocalyptic levels with quasi-tribal pounding, exotic modalities, hoarse vocals in no recognizable language, and for variety, a squealing, buzzing double-reed horn. Children of Buddha? Somewhere, even now, the specimen vials are being prepared again, in an effort to continue this inexplicable experiment. When their music is unleashed upon an unsuspecting world I'll be listening. (Charnel Music) bh



proving your wacky teen angst. The fucker grew on me, so I took a chance and hunted the album down, knowing full well I would be violating a self-imposed rule not to fall for paying \$15 for one godamn song and a bunch of other crap I'd never listen to again. Holy shit, I'm not kidding, that CD hasn't left my stereo in weeks. Lyrically, no song is packed with any more than "just enough", simple and decisive mantras repeated to a wide, cushy sonic lake bed, all fuzz and power with the sharp jagged edges sanded down just enough to swallow without spitting up blood. I particularly grew to like "Quiet Liar" at the end of the album, sadly repeating "this is a mess, an irreversable mess, built it myself 'cuz I thought it was right" over an ocean of guitar. Every day a new song is my favorite. Everyone I've played it for wants to tape it off me. Bastards. I guess I am that guy everyone drinks beer with and steals his records. (Epic) mp

Head." The Cows display their sensitive side on the earnest "Dear Abigale" and the acoustic ode "Laundromat," and betray feelings of desperation and insecurity on "Your Garbage Man" and the plaintive "Who Is He." All in all a fine glimpse into the psyche of somebody's Middle America. (Big Pop) jf

INSANE CLOWN POSSE

The Great Milenko

Self-styled hocus-pocus psycho schizos, the Insane Clown Posse toil in loopy, carnivalesque hip-hop. Scattering comedic conversations, death-defying skits, and rancid phone conversations amongst funky voodoo novelties and twisted Halloween-ish treats, instrumentalist and head fuckup Mike E. Clark's deranged ideas and clownish innovations are made to boogaloo through a modern-day House 'O Horrors. Wacky minstrels in the decaying urban gallery, the Posse mock such disparate subjects as filthy red-neck slime, inane game shows

KADURA

From the Depths of the Other Space

It had to have happened exactly this way: It's 1987. Michael Gira and Jarboe and the rest of the Swans are nipple-clip deep in Children of God shenanigans. The record's done, now they're touring. Probably in Germany. They return to the States unable to remember just exactly what happened after the Stuttgart show. And what happened was that a shadowy Japanese consortium abducted them, flew them back to Osaka and genetically revamped a sex-

Krautrock for the Millennium:

EC80R

All of Us Can Be Rich

SHIZUO

Shizuo vs. Shizor

Do you like the sample sound? Many people say that it's a shallow sound that can be quite off-putting. Oftentimes, we feel, it's a cold sound best played loud and fast to give it a heart. But is it sound and fury signifying nothing? Those "billion beats a minute" seem to rob the compositions subtle ability to seep into our systems and touch those dark places in our soul that SPK or Throbbing Gristle or Suicide do so effortlessly. So we're not sure if any of this has staying power.

EC80R



SHIZUO



On the other hand, we do love it when the Krauts get behind something because they always give 110% and they are so serious. Even when they're having fun!

Case in point being two new records from the Germany-based DHR (Digital Hardcore Recordings). While DHR is the same folk that brought you Atari Teenage Riot, neither EC8OR's *All of Us Can Be Rich* . . . or Shizuo's *Shizuo vs. Shizor* is as harsh or didactic as that sexy trio.

EC8OR is a less hyperactive, almost subtler example from the DHR stable. We'd put on our Atari Teenage Riot album, Delete Yourself, to compare and contrast, but we're afraid to; it scares us. We wouldn't say that EC8OR is more "listener-friendly" than ATR (hardly), but it's not as in-your-face. It's more punk to ATR's speedmetal, with seemingly lower-tech aesthetics in regard to samples and equipment value.

Shizuo, though, kicks ass! Pronounced "shit-soo-oh," it (he?) goes for a pace slower than EC8OR (yeah, a million beats a minute instead of a billion), one that's almost psychedelic. But it's hardly mellow, layering hyperactivity and nervousness atop hyperactivity and nervousness. In this respect, it's more like the Chemical Brothers, but more serious; more into paying tribute to Amon Duul than Parliament/Funkadelic or Schooly D.

It's experimental weirdness pretending to be dance music -

which is better, we suppose, than dance music pretending to be experimental weirdness. If you like Land of the Loops, Loop Guru and especially EBN with the predominant elements found in rap production (no vocals here really), then *Shizuo vs. Shizor* (whatever that means, who's Shizor?) is highly recommended. And it keeps getting funnier. Their cover of The Cramps' "New Kind of Kick" is right up there with the Resident's take on "It's A Man's, Man's, Man's, Man's World." (DHR/Grand Royal) il

LED ZEPPELIN BBC Sessions

It seems that Page and Plant have finally come to their senses and decided to make even more money than God needs by releasing some of their best work from 1969-71. This material, taken from BBC broadcasts, is the goods. Long before they sank into a quagmire of drugs and satanic ritual sacrifice, Led Zeppelin rocked. As hard as anybody. Okay, so every so often, Plant's weak attempts at vocal melisma - sort of like a neutered Howlin' Wolf speeded up - would make you

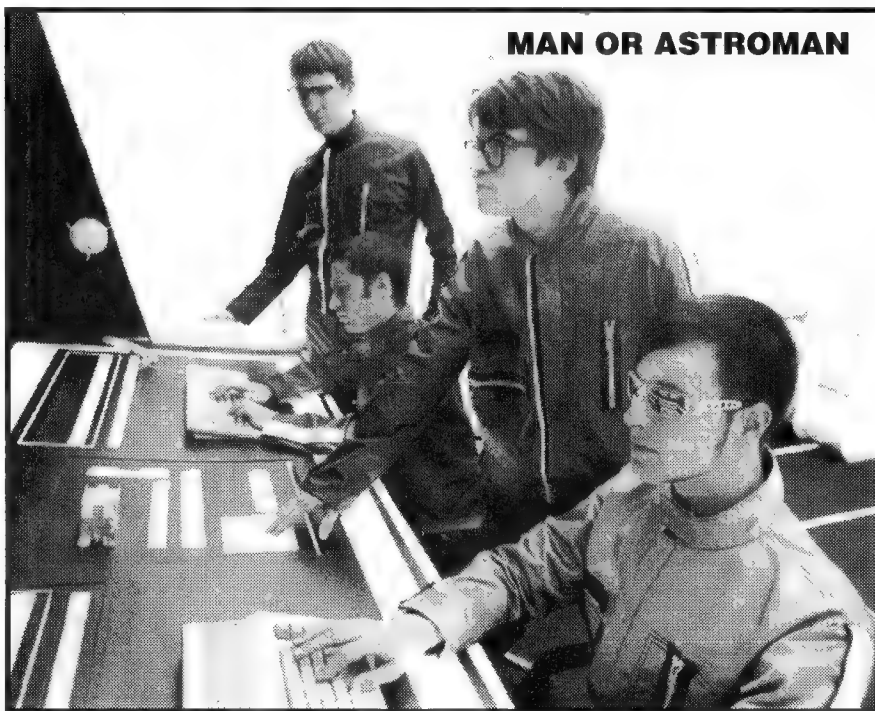
grind your teeth and wish the track was an instrumental. The rhythm section, however, was almost always locked in tight, and, sure, Page was pretty sloppy but sometimes he'd throw in a really nice, well-constructed passage that made you realize that on a given night he could get up there with anyone. Sessions is a two-CD set with an extra disc of interviews thrown in. Which you don't need since these guys are liars. I mean, after all, these are the same people who put their name on practically every classic blues song and claimed it was an original. Thankfully, Willie Dixon got a few million bucks from these wankers before he joined the choir invisible. Still, don't get me wrong: this is powerful stuff. "Black Dog" rocks along like a train, and "I Can't Quit You Baby" contains some of Page's best licks. You also get to hear the early greatness of the aforementioned and

shade and baby blood in his hotel suite. I'll bet Graham Bond was with him. But I digress, if you like Zep at all, you need this. If they had any brains left (Page and Plant that is) after all their debauchery, they'd do a Dick's Picks kind-of-thing like the Grateful Dead and release a bunch of their live shows. At last count, according to Phil, our local bootleg maven, who knows these things, there have been about 300 Zeppelin unlicensed CDs. Page/Plant should put some out; they'd have great sound quality and the fans would definitely buy. But the boys haven't thought of that. Maybe they'll read Brutarian and be inspired . . . (Atlantic) js

MAN OR ASTROMAN Made from Technetium

These strangers from a strange land return to planet earth after having perambulated in the ether with the misguided experiment otherwise known as 1000X. We

MAN OR ASTROMAN



vastly underrated rhythm machine otherwise known as Bonham and Jones. Of course, like almost every "live" disc by a major group (not counting drunken blues guys like Junior Kimbrough, et al.), sources tell me that there are in fact overdubs scattered throughout. I guess even early on Page was already burning deadly night-

will not dwell on that extended-play's shortcomings. Although there were many. Far too many. Far, far too many. Let us put that behind us though, difficult as it is, and concern ourselves with the joys of *Technetium* . . . Ladies and gentlemen, we are most happy to report that this collection of primarily sci-fi-spy astromentals, not to put too fine

a point on it: ROCKS! That means you, dear reader, can dance to it. All kinds of dances. The Funky Ro-Bot. The Astro Zombie. The Le Mental. There are a few grandiose bits of mysterious flummery but these bits are quite good. And spacey and disorienting. The rest of *Technetium* is, as we said, made for dancing. Thick meaty (sometimes minor key for that interplanetary feel) chords and suave but manly single-note riffs battle for supremacy while detuned guitars and bass yammer and twang and warehouse-priced drums beat out earth-bound rhythms. Zooming and whooshing in and out of the mix are the electronically-recreated sounds of the cosmos. Sometimes too there are voices. They struggle to make themselves heard. But we hear. Oh yes! We hear. And what we hear is this: Let the children lose it. Let the children use it. Let all the children boogie... Ah! Astromen we will take your music and words to heart. We will not blow it. We will not blow it. Because we know, like

you, it is all worthwhile. (Touch & Go) ds

MAINLINER Mainliner Sonic

From out of the Land of the Rising Sun a terrible strange beauty is born. A rough beast slouching towards Frisco full of passionate intensity and lacking all conviction in conventional song form. A three piece with recently enlisted Ruins' drummer Tatsuya Yoshida gracing us with five compositions (we use the term quite loosely here) wherein a single psychedelic riff is played over and over and over by one Kawabata Makoto (or said guitarist plays a shapeless solo allegretto tricked out in distortion, echo and wah-wah) while the skins are attacked like a starving man let loose at a banquet and the bass, though sunk way down in the muddy muddy mix, fancies itself the lead instrument. And sometimes it is. And mostly it isn't. And you won't care in any case because you'll probably have been foolish enough to turn Mainliner WAY

WAY up after the first skullfuck groove hit and are now frenziedly moving about your disordered one-room efficiency in a state of dulled ecstasy. (Charnel Music, Box 170277, San Francisco, CA 94117-0277) ds

THE MAKERS Tear Your World Apart (ep) Hunger (lp)

Reminding us a lot of their fellow Pacific Northwesters, The Sonics, The Makers are an energetic and hard-working band. Which is to their credit.

To us, it was obvious that this combo had listened to all the right *Back from the Grave* and *Pebbles* compilations and therefore they imitated those sounds not only perfectly, but too perfectly, down to the inarticulate teen yowling. An almost mathematical re-creation of the style making it difficult to get any sense of an original sensibility at work. In other words, their music is just not reaching out and touching us in that rock-a-delicious part of our soul that needs to jump up and down and run

around in circles.

If you're into the garage aesthetic and you see the Makers' records at a friend's house, or if you're one of those lucky stiffies who knows of a record store where they're still willing to play something for the potential customer, then by all means give 'em a listen. The Makers may really be your cup of coffee. (Estrus) il

MOG STUNT TEAM 5 King of the Retards

The big "alternative rock" acts were successful because they listed toward metal/heavy rock (for lack of a better term) and away from punk and post-punk. Groups like Alice Cooper, Ted Nugent and especially Black Sabbath were the primary influences for Nirvana and Soundgarden not Big Black or the Dead Kennedys.

So it's not surprising to find "alternative rock" act Mog Stunt Team 5 covering both Cheap Trick ("*Hello There*") and Kiss ("*Parasite*") on their latest offering. But said covers are merely



Check Out The New Loaf NOFX Just Pinched..



so long and thanks for all the shoes OUT NOW!



cherries atop a delicious sugary cake. A sugary cake with bite.

These boys have got it so bad, it hurts. And that hurts us. But in a good way. We will tell all our friends about this band. We will tell them that we have put the title track on auto-repeat and now find ourselves incessantly singing "Red light/Green light, Baby/Go! Go! GO!/I've sold my soul for rock 'n' roll!" We will keep our eyes open for the singles. And any subsequent discs. We have not felt this excited about a band in we don't know how long. Thanks Mog Stunt Team 5!. You're the greatest! You're the best! You're . . . [Writer hospitalized after grand mal seizure] (AmRep) il

RIC OCASEK

Troublizing

The Cars embodied everything annoying about late 70s/early 80s new wave power pop, and their work hasn't held up well over time. Nearly twenty years

after the Cars' first and only decent album, former leader Ric Ocasek has attempts a drab stab at modern rock credibility featuring a 90s big-rock all-star band, including Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan. Troublizing updates the Cars' trademark sound by turning up the guitars and drums. Unfortunately, Ocasek's quirky voice is too thin for most of the bombast. While his latest batch of songs bounce along agreeably and almost rock on occasion, they simply aren't as catchy as his best work. Moreover, Hawkes' synth doodling, which appears on half the tracks, is as cheesy as ever. Corgan's one songwriting contribution is just a more electronic version of his usual whining. (Columbia) df

ONNA-KODOMO

Syuuka

Soundscapes in the purest sense of the word. Shape without force. Paralyzed form.

Gesture without motion. A bass strikes notes, moves the bow, now digging in, now letting up. O'er top a crystalline voice beckons, sighs, cries. From a place we cannot see. Try as we might. Other enchantments find a guitar lightly striking chords, then fading into echo and reverberation, then reappearing. The phantasmal, lambent voice is with us always. In the distance a treated violin drones while synthesized tones wash over us. If we can call this music it is music aspiring to vaguely disturbing dream. A dream that stays even though dimly remembered. A dream . . .

[Raving versifier hospitalized in The T.S. Eliot Home for the Poetically Challenged.] (Charnel Music) ds

BETH ORTON

Heavenly

We've received a lot of female sensitivity-workshop music recently. Fiona Apple, Jewel, et

PANSY DIVISION

More Loving from Our Oven

Overt homosexuality in rock music is nothing new, but the Pansies are more explicit than their predecessors. While their graphic depictions of guys sucking dick and getting fucked in the ass are sure to alienate all but that ten percent, the Pansies at



RIC OCASEK



least poke fun at themselves (that's not all they're pokin'!). *More Loving* is a disjointed compilation of tracks recorded at various points from 1995 to '97 that varies from Beatleish pop to Dead Kennedy's-hardcore political rants. The originals deal amusingly with complications of gay love and discrimination, while their covers put a decidedly queer spin on well-known songs. Who else would rewrite Judas Priest's "Breakin' the Law" to make it about fucking in cars? (Lookout) df

al. - girly girls banding together to work the Lilith tour. Lilith. The Old Testament embodiment of evil. Girly girls flocked to the tour anyway. Dressed in tie-dyed shirts and Victorian full-length gowns. Swirling and swinging to sounds in and outside themselves. We don't know if Beth was a participant. She would have been most welcome with her ethereal melodies and dreamy sing-song singing. It is kind of heavenly though. She even requests the presence of angels. And often, it sounds like they've honored her entreaties. For they, like she, understand that it is not long, the weeping and the laughter. Love and desire and hate. It has no portion in us after we pass the gate. Beth, dearest Beth, desolate and sick of old passions, has apparently passed over and now seeks to give us back our dreams. We, earthbound, fearful, will strive to listen and be faithful. In our addle-pated fashion. (Dedicated) ds

LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY

Arkology

This is a nifty 3 CD box set of the legendary Jamaican producer's 70's work. Which we'd like to tell you about. But we can't as the cheap bastards at Island only saw fit to send us a fifteen track promo disc. Which is really nice but it's not the whole ball of wax so what can we say? That Island should have sent us the box? That Perry did a lot of his

greatest work in the 60's? That a lot of this isn't dub or Perry singing (a fine and distinctive vocalist in his own right) but his production work for artists like Max Romeo and Junior Murvin? Well, we'll just say this, all of the major Jamaican artists and djs recorded at Perry's Black Ark (hence "Arkology") studio in the 70's so three CDs probably just scratches (get it?) the surface and therefore you should spring for it and we, unfortunately (there goes our spliff money) will too. (Island) ds

THE PIXIES

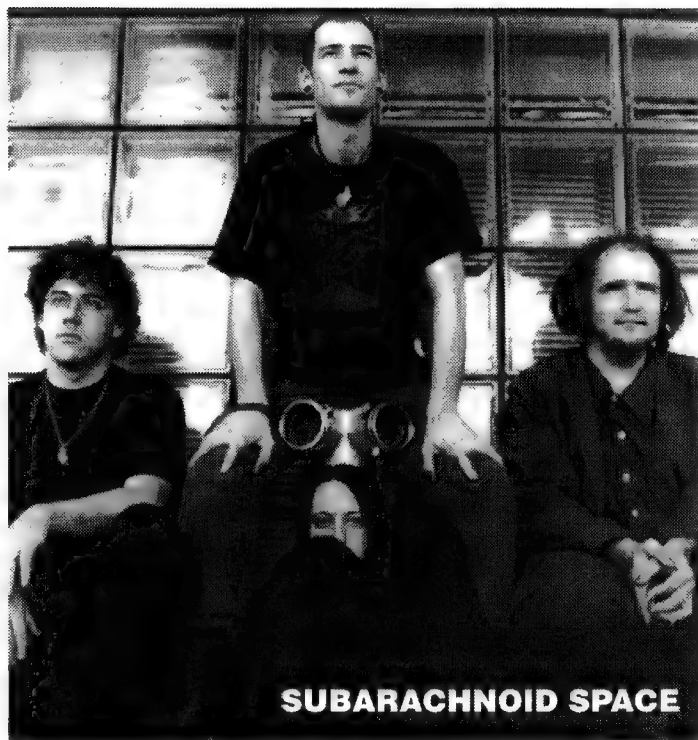
Death to the Pixies, 1987-1991

One can make a strong case that Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," arguably the most important rock song of the 90s, is a Pixies' knockoff. Of course, Nirvana knocked Michael Jackson off the top of the Billboard charts, while the Pixies never broke out of the college radio circuit before their 1991 breakup. Death sums up the Pixies' five-year stand in two discs that include the best tracks from their four albums and one ep on the first disc and a live set from 1990 on the second. Dominated by Black Francis' feral howling and oddball song-writing sensibility, the studio set is the seamless collection of aces they were never quite able to put together at any one time. Though the live set, which repeats much of the first disc's songs, could have used a more dynamic drum sound, its juxtaposition of the band's rawness and Kim Deal's baby doll backing vocals provide elements missing from the studio set. (DAD) df

PURPLE IVY SHADOWS

Under & OK

A six-track sampler, or maybe an ultra-maxi single, with a pleasant but unrepentantly, noncommercial sound despite a nasal singer who sounds like Perry Farrell at his spiciest (or is that J. Mascis at his Neil Youngiest?). The guitar reigns over all - sometimes crystalline, sometimes fuzzed, sometimes acoustic - building up layers of wide-open atmosphere that smacks neither of the mosh pit or the clove-cigarette-reeking coffeehouse. *Under & OK* is probably best listened to in a car



traveling aimlessly along a two-lane blacktop (never an interstate) winding past derelict silos, high corn and sinister gas station staffed by quirky veterans with unsettling facial tics. A journey in which you know you're bound to find your life again. Hopefully, around the next bend. Of course, for all that, you'll have to listen more than once. Not a problem. (Slow River, 27 Congress St, Salem, MA 01970) bh

MACK STEVENS

Dangerous Man/Home Made Tattoo

While ersatz-country continues to be pushed down our throats by way of Goober-vision aka Nashville Network, The Box and Garth Brooks HBO specials and tepid y'alternative acts like Wilco get all the press, retrograde visionaries like Mack Stevens continue to toil in relative obscurity. A shame 'cause Mack Stevens is the real deal, an unabashed lover of down-home music in all its guises: rockabilly, honky-tonk, hillbilly, white soul, trucker, swing, undistilled c&w. Hell, ole Mack even serves up some demented raveups a la Hasil Adkins: "Headless Darlin'," "Moppin' The Floor With My Baby's Head," and "Burned Beyond Recognition," (the sad tale of a jealous lover, his

unfaithful gal and a deep fat fryer) jest to show he's got all the bases covered. And he's rounded-up what sounds like a veteran group of Sun-session players to

showcase his high-lonesome tenor. Not that Mack can't drop down and git real nasty or tear-choked when he has to. He can. Fact is, there's little he or his people can't do. 'Cept travel since y'all are not buying his records. A darn shame. (Freedonia, 2794 NW 1010 Corsicana, TX 75110) ds

SUBARACHNOID SPACE

Almost Invisible

One guess as to what genre this band is mining. Yes, boys and girls it's psychedelica! Non-poppy, Spaceman-Three-as-opposed-to-Pink-Floyd division. Which means you can "kind" of groove to it. Especially if you've had a couple of hits of acid. Alright, one hit of acid! What do I know? Do you think, with my barely integrated psyche, I'm fool enough to take LSD? God, I'd end up spending the rest of my life worrying about having hydrocephalic babies and combating fears of tall buildings and elevators and the number thirteen . . . Oh, excuse me, where was I? . . . Ommmmmm . . . There it is,

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Bubarachnoid Space: heavily reverbed wailing and lapsing to rhiming to surging to wailing guitars anchored to one chord monochromatic drones whilst drums and bass arrhythmically sport. The sound ebbs and flows and often mutates into something vaguely resembling danceable time signatures. But more importantly, there's an overriding melodicism in these four or five or six compositions that keeps things from, try as Bubarachnoid might or might not, becoming monotonous. Although the beauty of this whole improvised project is that the listener can focus on the bass work or interperate drumming over the course of the disc and not get bored. *Almost Invisible* is that good. (Release) ds

SUPERTONES

Supertones Strike Back

Here's a novel concept: Christian ska. Orange County's Supertones combine Jamaican rhythms, Green Day power

chords and occasional hints of rap and surf guitar with lyrics that have an overtly Christian viewpoint. "Jump for Jesus" indeed. The 'Tones are quirky, but most of us, particularly us lapsed Catholics, don't want to hear religious preaching in our music, be it by George Harrison, Amy Grant or Bob Dylan. (BEC) df

TODAY IS THE DAY

Temple of the Morning Star

Here comes Satan, this time disguised as a band claiming to have influenced everybody but God since 1992. Neat trick, but would you expect any less from the Father of Lies? Never mind their huge heads, how's the music? Loud, fast, dense, with lurching metalurgical rhythms and dentist-drill sonics. Distorted lyrics so chockablock full of loathing, misery, and nihilism it feels half tongue-in-cheek, half tongue-up-Anton-LaVey's-ass. The most interesting bits are the more experimental: The acoustic title track, the oddball collage utilizing Waylon

Jennings' "Good-Hearted Woman," the random dialogue clips. Just so we know they have no influences, they finish with a hidden track, a cover of "Sabbath, Bloody Sabbath." But enough of me, let us let hear from Day's leader, Steve Austin: "[These are] Mind altering hymns to the devil. This album is suicide. Fucking you in the ass. There is no other way." Sure there is: Just keep repeating, "This is a joke. This is a joke . . ." (Relapse) bh

VARIOUS

American Primitive Vol. 1

John Fahey's Revenant label, in its short life, has issued some great CDs, stuff totally unavailable elsewhere. The first release under the imprimatur of the fabled Tacoma Park, MD guitarist was *Nefertiti, The Beautiful One Has Come*, a long out-of-print Cecil Taylor double LP culled from a '62 show in Denmark. Although Nefertiti was new to disc, Fahey and label associate Dean Blackwood

decided that wasn't enough for jazz fans and so threw on an additional 28 or so minutes from that classic gig. These guys are serious! Now comes the amazing compilation *American Primitive Vol. 1- Raw Pre-War Gospel*. All the material is taken from ancient 78s and within these ancient grooves we hear - sounding like drunken angels singing through the aether - Charley Patton under the name Elder J. J. Hadley, doing a nice little ditty called "Prayer Of Death Pts. 1-2" and Blind Roosevelt Graves and Brother gracing us with "Woke Up This Morning (With My Mind On Jesus)." No explanation on my part, or anyone's for that matter, will prepare the listener for the primal, visceral impact of these performances. Most of these artists were itinerant street singers, many of them homeless, who recorded maybe one or two sessions and then died of exposure on the boulevards of Memphis or some small town. A favorite here is Eddie Head and His Family doing

What the fuck ya gonna do with the rest of your life?

SOUL SEARCHING SUN

LIFE OF AGONY

The new LOA album featuring "Weeds"

ROADRUNNER
Produced by Phil Nicolo and Life of Agony

"Down On Me" which knocks hell out of the Janis Joplin remake recorded thirty-odd years later. All of this though is essential listening for true, red-blooded Americans . . . (Revenant) js

VARIOUS

The Songs Of Jimmie Rodgers: A Tribute

Bob Dylan. He slapped this tribute disc together. A celebration of the songcraft of the man - died tragically young from tuberculosis - generally regarded as the father of country music. Dylan claims a greater legacy. He agrees with Jerry Lee Lewis that the only four vocal innovators in this century were Al Jolson, Hank Williams, ole Jerry Lee and the Singing Brakeman. Oh ho ho really? Well what about Sinatra and Dean? And Al Martino? And Jerry Vale? . . . Anyhoo, in a collection like this you know people weaned on this e.g. Steve Earle, Willie Nelson, Alison Krauss are going to turn in fine performances; what you don't know is how bankrupt sensibilities like Bono and Jerry Garcia will come through. Well, Bono does just fine; his haunting version of "Dreaming With Tears In My Eyes" which opens the tribute is stunning. Garcia sounds dis-solute, as always, but he's got a crackerjack six piece band behind him. And he's dead. But what's up with Iris Dement? God, someone put a bullet in her brainpan. Fingers drawn slowly down a blackboard. What, is she blowing Dylan? . . . The listener will also conclude that he or she can do without Dwight Yoakam's minimalist interpretation of "T For Texas" (a curious choice for a closer). That leaves twelve choice cuts out of fourteen, not a bad average in any league. (Columbia) ds

VARIOUS

Mojave

Disco dressed in synthesized jungle frippery. Ambient muzak tricked out in middle and near-eastern foofaraw. Welcome to electronica. In its more minimalist forms: trance, ambient, tribal. Take a synthesized beat, looped bass, shabby little jazz riff, or a meandering exotic melodic line, layer with sepulchral Arabic pule,

shooses and swooshes, blips and bleeps and there you have it. The muzak for the youth of today. Tangerine Dream did it with more style. Eno did it with more intelligence. What matter. Rave on, suckers. (Volcano) ds

VARIOUS

Music For TV Dinners

What fresh hell is this? The premiere American release of 50s and 60s production music. Think Bob Barker. Think Ren & Stimpy. Now try to wrap yourself around the concept of detritus as subliminal mood enhancer. Yes, muzak in its boldest and most insinuatingly ingratiating form. Blindingly bright, sur-really snappy, lasciviously lush. The strings sigh and sing of purchase. The horns pop and snap and brassily welcome you into the happy happy land of consumerville. Percussion creates a Pavlovian rhythmic response while lulling the listener into a false sense of security. Buy. Accept. Do not question. Recommended cuts: numbers 6, 11 and 14 as they are swinging lounge numbers and betray the influence of emotion. (Scamp) ds

MIKE WATT

Contemplating the Engine Room

Watt's all-star solo debut, *Ballhog or Tugboat*, was essentially a tribute to himself. On *Engine Room*, he returns for real to the three-piece format in which he excelled as ace of bass with the Minutemen and Firehose. Fronting a band for the first time, he's made a loosely autobiographical, technically involved concept record revolving around his family history in San Pedro, California, life as a journeyman musician and working in the engine room of a tugboat. Watt's grizzly bass voice



STEVE WYNN

matches his bass guitar, while guitarist Nels Cline and drummer and Stephen Hodges complement him well. Though he runs out of material at the end, Watt does a fine job as captain of this ship. (Columbia) df

GERT WILDEN & ORCHESTRA

Schoolgirl Report & Other Music from Sexy German Films (1968-1972)

Soft-core porn films disguised as social information for the good of society, *The Schoolgirl Report* film series (sample subtitles: "What All Parents Should Know," "What Keeps Parents Awake at Night," "What Drives Parents to Despair") displayed foxy young German girls in bell bottoms and mod dresses and later in showers, bedrooms, and free-love parties. In the background pulsed the vaguely hip rock music of composer Gert Wilden - check it out while looking over the nubile, nude schulmadchen's in the thoroughly illustrated booklet. The package combines the best of three great "incredibly strange" worlds: exploitation films, exotica music, and vintage porn mags. The LP cuts off two

tracks, offers fewer as well as a number of different pix, but includes a poster and larger reproductions. (Crippled Dick Hot Wax, PO Box 1270, NY, NY 10116) jb

STEVE WYNN

Sweetness and Light

On *Sweetness and Light*, the former Dream Syndicate frontman recalls a lot of vintage rock of twenty to thirty years ago, but has enough smarts to avoid overt copying. He wears his influences everywhere - a little Buffalo Springfield here, a little Byrds there, a dash of old Motown for good measure - but his crafty songwriting is more than the sum of any of its parts. Highlights include "Silver Lining" which pokes fun at fear of flying, and the title track an examination of a woman's ambivalence over a former love. Add to this a couple of well-chosen covers, an obscure Ray Davies' song ("This Strange Effect") and a recasting of Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong's "That's the Way Love Is," and you've got, overall, an impressive effort. (Zero Hour) df



KING SUCKERMAN
George P. Pelecanos
 (Little, Brown & Co.)

Some people just need killing. Like Wilton Cooper, a psychopathic ex-con and his butt-boy, Bobby Roy Clagget, an emaciated, teenage, acne-ridden, black wanna-be. Bobby Roy's a psycho too; when he first runs into Cooper it's at a drive-in, where Bobby Roy has just blown away the projectionist for smiling at him earlier in the day. Oh yes, skinny little Bobby Roy's a genuine lunatic - carries a shotgun like a dandy carries a cane - but he needs direction. And Cooper wants to give it to him.

So Cooper spirits Bobby Roy out of the drive-in in his red 1970 Challenger convertible and hooks him up with the other two members of his gang. Then it's off to D.C. to do some crimes. First they have to meet their drug broker, a fence and marijuana dealer from Jersey named Spags. Spags is going to hip them to where they can score big time cane from some bikers living outside Baltimore. For a ten percent finder's fee. That's twenty grand.

The meet with Spags starts smooth. Until Dimitri Karras and Marcus Clay show up. Clay is a Vietnam vet running a with-it funk & soul music shop. Karras, his friend, is a good-guy, kind of lost at the moment, dealing a little weed to make ends meet. Asks Clay to come with him after a game of b-ball to pick up his stash.

Too many people wind up in Spags' living room. Temper's flare over Spags' girlfriend. Spags slaps his girl. Karras punches out Spags. Bobby Roy, his acne turning twenty shades of purple, lifts his shotgun. And gets his teeth knocked down his throat by Clay. Clay takes the twenty thou. Adding insult to injury, Karras takes the girl.

So it's war. First Cooper and company have to take care of business. Take care of the bikers. Then it's Karras and Clay's turn. Spags' gives his blessing. The wages of sin is death. Karras and Clay know that. They just forget that when Death is on your trail it doesn't matter to Him who gets in the way.

There's a lot going on here. Obviously. A lot of characters. A lot of talk. A lot of action. Everything sounds, feels, dead on. The old Greeks talking to the old Blacks. The teenage stoners talking amongst themselves. The exegesis of Seventies Afro-American music and blax-



ploitation film disguised as dialogue. The bond between the men, the men and the women, and even Cooper and his punk. Pelecanos is so good it's scary. King Suckerman will scare you too. Because Pelecanos pulls you in. Has you moving in and out of his characters effortlessly. So you feel and see everything. The punches that land. The bullets that lacerate the flesh. The words that stab the heart. You feel it all. And you want it to end. And you want it to keep going. And you're turning the pages and talking to yourself. You're moving in and out. Now this one. Now here. Now there. It gets difficult to breathe after a while. Hang on. Hang in there. This is a walk on the wild side worth taking. Whether or not you think you can handle it. (Dom Salemi)

THE ANUBIS GATES *Tim Powers*

(Ace)
The winner of the 1983 Philip K. Dick Award is finally back in print for all those readers who, like me, missed this wild fantasy tale on its first go-round. Our story opens on two ageless Egyptian sorcerers in 18th Century London. Amenophis Fikee and Monboddio Romanelli - aka Doctor Romany - are trying to make the English leave Egypt so they can restore the ancient Egyptian gods to power. The trouble is, the sorcerers don't have much magic left in them - "These days we'd get headaches and double vision . . . if we tried to charm a pack of street dogs out of the way; and even then as likely as not it'd go awry and they'd all simply drop dead where they stood. It's easier to shout and wave a stick at them."

While trying to channel the spirit of Anubis to open a gateway in time and release the aforesaid gods when they were at their most powerful, the spell goes awry and Fikee ends up as a were-wolf with the ability to switch bodies. This is not quite what they had in mind.

In the meantime, J. Cochran Darrow, an eccentric researcher and multi-multi-millionaire in modern-day England, has developed a working method for time-

travel. The key is, it only works with "gaps" in the time-line, places where, he believes, there were increases in paranormal events as a result of a sudden weakening in the universe's physical laws. Hoping to make money by sending tour groups back in time (although this scheme is just a blind for a darker purpose). Darrow hires depressed English Lit scholar Brendan Doyle to accompany him to 1810 England as a chaperon/lecturer for a coterie of dilettantes keen on attending a lecture by the poet Coleridge in a London coffee-house.

Doctor Romany traces fluctuations in the ambient magic level to Darrow's time travelers and tries to capture them in an effort to learn what's behind this sudden burst of raw energy. He manages to kidnap only Doyle and then promptly loses him. On the run and desperate to return to his own time, Doyle must stay one step ahead of his pursuers while somehow learning his way through the twists and turns of the oddly Dickensian London demimonde, a twilight world where beggars' guilds have more power than the police and magical creations like the Spoon-size Boys and the murderous Hairy Man-Ape roam.

As complicated and ridiculous as much of this sounds, Powers, nevertheless, manages to pull it all together with style and aplomb while injecting plenty of dark humor and darker (and often sanguinary) action. The Anubis Gates moves swiftly and effectively too (Powers is anything but schematic in his plotting) and it possess a moody, quirky, atmosphere, the kind of ambiance once found in the best horror films. While none of this is likely to cause nightmares, reading it may cause a sleepless night or two as the novel, once surrendered to, is almost impossible to put down.

(C. R. Brusso)

THE REDNECK MANIFESTO *Jim Goad*

(Simon & Schuster)

If you were a fan of Jim and Debbie Goad's *ANSWER Me!*, one of the most

notorious fanzines to ever come along down the pike (shit, that piece of work was always something more than just a zine!), then you'll just love this recently published work of Jim's. God knows he's picked a title that's guaranteed to piss off and/or scare quite a few people.

In exposing how the "redneck" and "poor white trash" are the only minority in the U.S. to whom the media has been given carte blanche to mock and ridicule, Goad delves deeper into the way in which the rich keep poor blacks and poor whites at each others' throats in a bogus race war, rather than having the two disenfranchised groups join forces to start a class war:

Might redneck hostility be explicable not through bigotry, but from hundreds of years of sinking slowly into a demoralizing turd-heap of debt, overwork, and broken promises?

We can say we've heard it all before, but that's 'cause we're a bunch of snot-nose college grads who've even heard of people like Marx and Engels. Goad says it in a new, well-researched and ANGRY! voice we've not heard before in either fiction or non-fiction. Besides, just 'cause we've heard before doesn't mean that it's not still a problem. He sure does use footnotes, but Goad does his damndest to avoid sounding academic and that's all the more to his credit:

Very frequently, enemies are merely brothers fighting over the same raggedy hand-me-downs. Rednecks and blacks seem like strange bedfellows, but maybe not. "We Shall Overcome" was originally a white labor song. And Harriet Tubman was missing teeth, just like the hillbillies.

Goad's style echoes the similarly angry voice of the late Gustav Hasford, the writer who penned the vicious Vietnam classics, *The Short-Timers* (turned by Stanley Kubrick into the movie *Full Metal Jacket*) and *The Phantom Bloop*. Which is all the more reason to rush out and pick up this "manifesto" before liberal white protesters have it banned or Jim Goad is made to "disappear" by the Trilateral Commission. (Ivan Lerner)



GUNS, GERMS, AND STEEL *Jared Diamond*

(W.W. Norton)

Well, my all-time-top-five-books-ever-written list has to be reorganized to make room for this one. That don't happen very often. Hardly ever, in fact.

Ever blunder into a book that answers questions that have been gnawing away at you for half a lifetime? The kind of questions that won't go away, but no matter how much you poke and prod, you can't ever seem to get a proper handle on them?

I give you "Yali's Question," straight off of the second page of text, page fourteen of *Guns, Germs and Steel*.

Diamond, in case you were wondering, doesn't mess around, he gets right down to work with no piddling ahead of time.

"Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?"

What a jewel! A wonder of compressed expression that gets to the heart of the darkness surrounding European concepts of race and intelligence.

"Yali's Question" is one of those classics that are so damn simple to pose and express and yet which, to answer fully, lifetimes of hard work and discovery may fail to properly deal with it.

Why is the sky blue? What's gravity made of? What makes things float? Why can birds fly, but I can't? Why do people have hair under their arms?

The list is damn near endless. Some have been cracked by legions of clever minds, some remain unsolved and continue to generate heroic efforts to unlock their fundamental mysteries. All speak to that ineffable something that makes us striving humans instead of senseless beasts.

"Yali's Question" is among the best of the lot and has, unfortunately, allowed the narrow-minded and the dogmatic to concoct all manner of false answers over the years.

For instance: "What makes things float?" The pat answer is, "Because they're buoyant." Well great, what the

hell does THAT mean? "Things that are buoyant are lighter than the medium they float in." Well, no duh, Sherlock. But what EXACTLY the hell is going on? How in hell does the water "know" that the wood is lighter than it is? And, having figured that one out, how does it "know" to send the wood that's lighter to the surface while allowing the stones that are heavier to sink to the bottom? What the fuck does lightness even have to do with it anyway? What's PUSHING that piece of wood toward the surface even as stones plummet to the bottom?

At this level, most "experts" are exposed for the fools they really are and either the subject gets changed or the question remains fundamentally unanswered. Any nitwit can spout theories about buoyancy, or perhaps "For every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction," or some damn canned buzzword of other, but that don't mean they actually "know" what the hell's really goin' on. Far from it, in most cases.

Ditto "Yali's Question."

Racist bastards and religious dogmatists across the continents and across generations have "answered" "Yali's Question" over and over. And always, it would appear, for some horrid self-serving purpose that, in the final analysis, belies reality. One more time: "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?"

Is it, "White people are intrinsically superior to black people." Or is it, "We, as God's chosen people, were fated from the beginning to lead the world." Or maybe it was, "We invented steel and guns first and we kicked your asses with 'em." That one comes closer than the first pair of self-serving non-answers, but glaringly fails to address where the damn steel and guns came from in the first place and howcum WE got 'em first and not Yali's people. Are we back to "White people are intrinsically . . ." Nah, fuck, that shit. That CAN'T be right.

Correct. That can't be right and that ISN'T right.

This is where Jared Diamond's impossibly excellent book kicks into high gear.

Jared has worked it out. Damned if he ain't managed to answer "Yali's Question."

All the great sweep of human history from misty beginnings eons ago right up to the present mess in South Africa has been scrutinized and analyzed and made to cough-up its potent secret. Astounding stuff! I'll not even attempt to give you the answer to "Yali's Question" here in this little jeremiad. It won't fit. But I WILL give you a snippet or two.

Imagine Bantu tribesmen. Imagine them as a sort of cavalry. But not on horseback. No, not that at all. Imagine them instead as having somehow managed the trick of domesticating RHINOCEROSES. Imagine them astride the backs of their rhinos, pouring into Rome. Without doubt, the empire would have been crushed then and there and history would have taken a wildly different course. The only fly in this entire ointment is that rhinos can't be domesticated. It's been tried. Don't work. But if it had . . .

Imagine North and South America aligned not north and south, but east and west of one another. Imagine that between them there was no isthmus choke point, no rain forest barricade, no desert blockade. Imagine two burgeoning centers of civilization, the Aztec and the Inca, free to exchange ideas, foods, and technology without interference from differing climatological regimes and physical barriers. Imagine them with large domesticated draft animals. Imagine them swarming into Spain and cutting into the heart of Europe like a hot knife through butter.

The above snippets are no more indicative of the full answer to "Yali's Question" than a snippet of the hair from someone's head is indicative of that person's full personality. But perhaps they'll set you to thinking.

The answer to Yali is highly ramified and recondite, but it's sure as hell easy enough to understand once you grasp the central principle of it, the principle of geographic contingency. Our old friend Dame Fortune as expressed in mountains, steppes, grassland, and swamp. And all the life forms that lived, or didn't



live, in any of those places.

Jared Diamond has produced a stunning piece of work in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. If I was him, I wouldn't write another thing, 'cause I can't imagine how a work this profound could ever be equalled, never mind topped.

Buy this book. Take it with you everywhere you go. And whenever you cross paths with some bigoted asshole, or religious idiot, show them Diamond's tome. Tell them to read it. Closely. And when they're done, ask them to pass it on. (James MacLaren)

GRAVIKORDS, WHIRLIES & PYROPHONES: EXPERIMENTAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Bart Hopkin

(book and CD set from Ellipsis Arts)

Step right up! Ladies and Gentlemen! See tubular organs sounded by immersion in flame! See the Semi-Civilized Tree! Sit in the Beepmobile - if you dare - and pedal while you blow its many horns! See pneumaphones powered by people sitting in beanbag-like airbags! See gravikords, whirlies and pyrophones!

This musical freakshow of a book introduces 37 new and unexpected sound sources and the people who made them, a carnival of musical dead ends and strange futuristic devices that keep cropping up in rock music - Moogs, theremins, Buchla drum synthesizers. The text summarizes the musical and philosophic journeys these crackpot inventors have gone through, and there are plenty of pictures that make you want to play along or invent your own, while the accompanying CD lets your ears in on the fun. All of it is unlike anything you've ever heard.

The often concise text left me wanting a more direct look behind the scenes, a seat behind the sideshow curtain so as to hear the undiluted stories and adventures rather than the filtered accounts. Bart Hopkin edits the *Experimental Musical Instruments Journal*, a clearinghouse of information on the subject and surely knows more than he's telling

about each performer/inventor. Moreover, this slim volume could use a few extra pages; although a few folks, like Reed Ghazala (who rewires store-bought musical toys to achieve more interesting sounds) get a fuller treatment. Nonetheless, this is a complete entertainment package, one which will shock and amaze for days, weeks or years, and serve as embarkation for further exploration and enlightenment. (Jeff Bagato)

I WHO HAVE NEVER KNOWN MEN

Jacqueline Harpman

(Seven Stories Press)

Where are they? What happened to their memories of their former lives? Could it be that everyone they once knew is dead? The 40 women crammed together in an underground bunker, a horrifying panopticon patrolled by whip-cracking guards, have no idea. It's up to Jacqueline

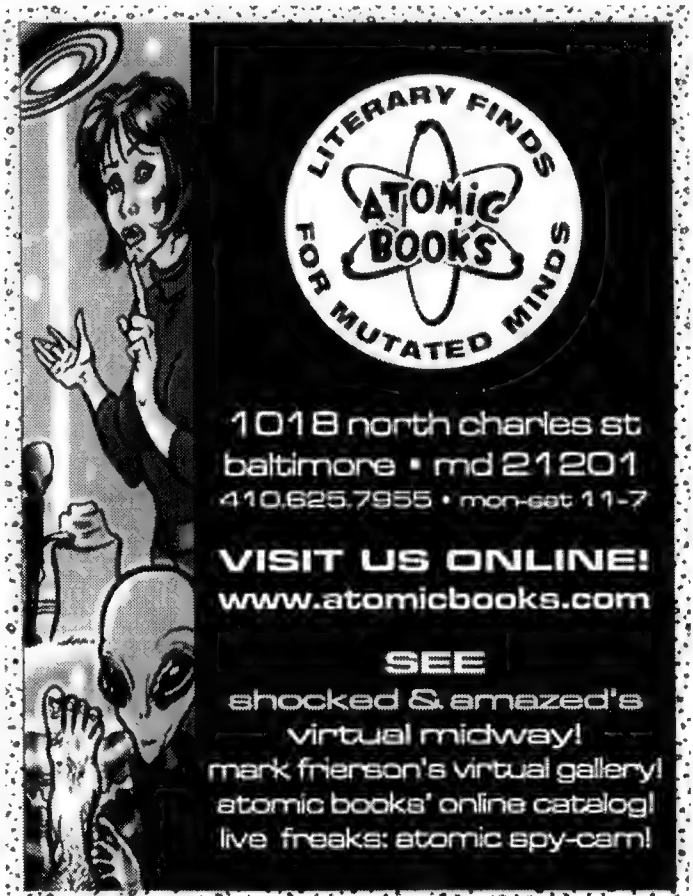
Harpman's narrator, the youngest prisoner in this bleak but fascinating postapocalyptic novel, to figure out what it means to have a life of her own. First she discovers thinking as recreation. Then she learns to tell time by counting her heartbeats. Soon after, the doors are opened and the amazed prisoners escape to a grassy prairie with not another living soul in sight. *I Who Have Never Known Men* (which has been translated from the French by Res Schwartz) is about as heavyhearted as fiction can get, but all the loneliness and oblivion of a deserted world won't stop us

from following the narrator as far as she can go. We may share the nameless young woman's frustration when she learns that freedom is not enough, but each revelation that directs her steps is a small miracle. (Sally Eck)

ANGELS IN THE MIRROR: VODOU MUSIC OF HAITI

(hardcover book with CD from Ellipsis)

Rather than focusing on the more lurid aspects of vodou trance, midnight rituals and sorcery (the fun stuff), *Angels in the Mirror* explores the manifestations of vodou philosophy in daily life. Surprisingly, this approach effectively explains the complex world of vodou spirits, the vodou world-view, and the relationship between dance and spiritual expression. The unifying idea here is the singular Haitian notion of the mirror world inhabited by "les invisibles" represented by crossroads symbolism. And



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excerpt from Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen* covers some of this ground, but the original photographs and text hold their own in terms of the significance and quality of the information presented. The project is given us courtesy of the woman who produced Smithsonian Folkways' *Rhythms of Rapture: Sacred Music of Haitian Vodou* so you know it's authentic stuff. The CD is well produced, the singing and drumming energetic and vivid. Doesn't have the spooky air of the aforementioned Deren record but the music is still powerful, even it isn't all associated with all-nite spirit calling. All in all, a fine package and a good resource, complete with contact info, glossary, lyrics and bibliography.

(Jeff Bagato)

GODS OF DEATH

Yaron Svoray

(Simon & Schuster)

Snuff films, like the Yeti and the alien crash at Roswell, have become the stuff of urban legend. Why is this so? Western culture has graced us with the Inquisition, the Final Solution and the writings of the Marquis de Sade to name

just a few outrages, why then is it so difficult for society to admit the existence of filmed murders? Yaron Svoray hits on the reason, I think:

There is no longer a concept of true evil as a thing that exists unalloyed, with no part of it good or redeeming. We are taught now that there is no true good or true evil, only varying degrees of each. An evil with no element of good . . . cannot be classified and therefore must be rejected.

Thus, our attempts to humanize monsters like Charles Manson and Ted Bundy. Pure evil is too frightening. So we listen and nod our heads in agreement as talking heads tell us that Manson and Bundy are actually quite witty and charming; chuckle a bit when hearing former friends and co-workers characterize John Wayne Gacy as avuncular and industrious. We need to hear this. Our hearts and minds can bear only so much reality.

There is no spin we can put on the snuff film. Child porn is a horror but it allows us to fantasize about the possibility, however slight, of escape. No one gets out alive in the murder movie. If there is a pure manifestation of evil in the world, to paraphrase Svoray, the

snuff film is it.

Svoray, though, wants more than mere "evidence" of pure evil. He knows snuff films exist. He's seen one. There's a bigger story here: the source of this pornography. To find the source is to look on the face of pure evil, to shake hands with the Devil himself.

Gods Of Death is the story of this search.

It's not a pleasant journey. It's frightening, exhausting, and in the end, dispiriting. Because, as you may already know, and Svoray discovers (although I think he was too smart not to already know as well), there is no source of evil and snuff film rather than being the pure distillation of this "evil" is, in actuality, part of something "much larger and more horrible." And it has little to do with the people who traffic in this kind of pornography. For as Svoray notes, they "are much like everyone else. It is really only their indifference that allows them to do what they do . . ." An indifference that is the key to unlocking that "something" larger. To getting an answer that is not quite an answer.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness?

(Dom Salemi)

ALSO AVAILABLE: The Work—The Collected Short Fiction of Jack Ketchum

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Special by Peter Sotos

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You can't always get what you want; but if you try sometime, you get what you need.

- Jagger/Richards

ON MANOR'S MIND

by Stately Wayne Manor

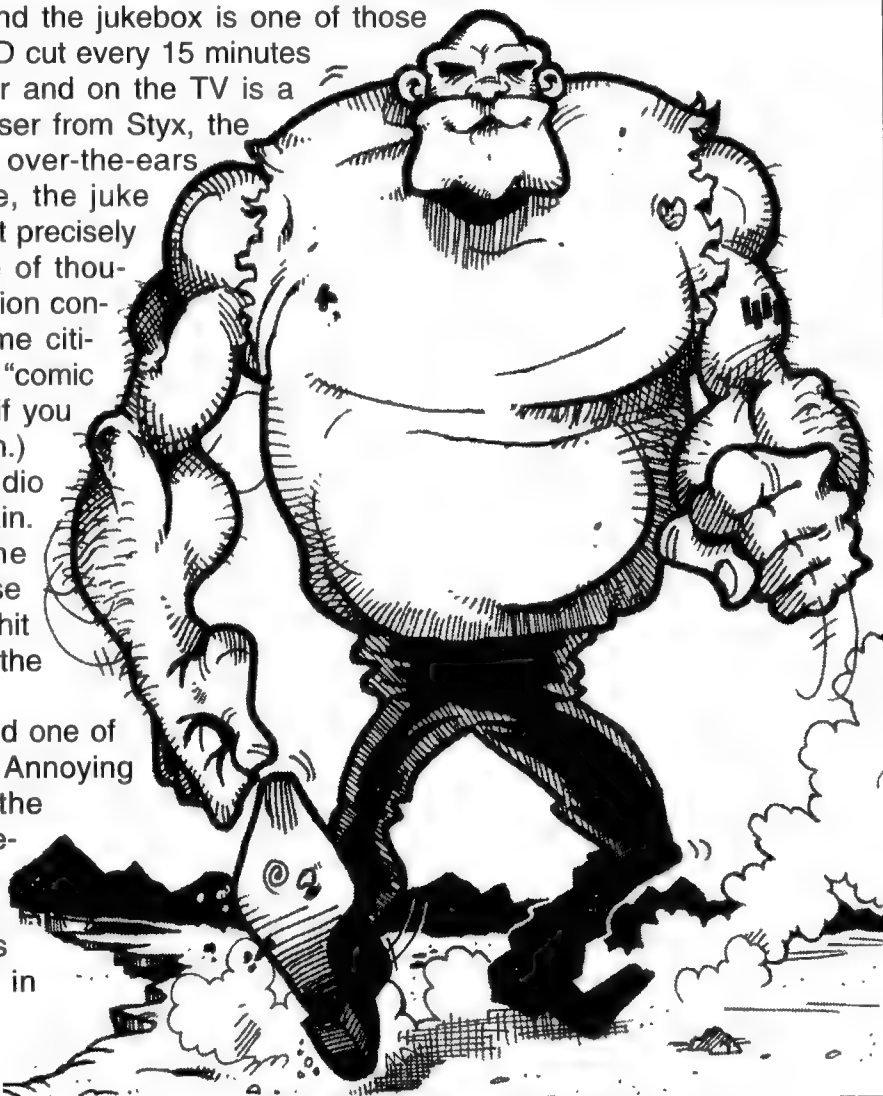
Whenever you see a printed piece (besides this one) begin with a "profound" lyric quote, do yourself a large favor: don't read the article. Ninety percent of those using this device in an attempt to be "heavy" or "deep" couldn't write a parking ticket let alone a compelling manuscript. Remember, these are the same drips who actually spent money on the Kansas CD box set. (I know a guy who was going for a Bachelor Of Education degree, his goal being - and this is a verbatim quote - "to teach the poetry of Rush." And you thought the ebola virus was frightening!)

There is something worse than the lyric-quoting sap, the columnist who insists on dragging his romantic woes into the mix - made even more inane by their irrelevance to the subject matter. "I'm sorry if I don't sound that enthused about ping pong this issue, but there was a very special someone who used to be a shining light in my heart. And now this fine lady has moved on and my candles have grown dim." Four out of five dentists say, "WHO CARES"? The only thing stopping me from personally going over to your place and arm whipping you through the front window, Jack, is your wise decision not to add, "Now all we are is dust in the wind."

While on the subject of "classic rock" - a oxymoron comparable to "tight slacks" - allow me to relate a true story of gin joint jive. Bear in mind the jukebox is one of those models that plays a randomly picked CD cut every 15 minutes it remains inactive. I'm sitting in a bar and on the TV is a local dinosaur deejay interviewing a loser from Styx, the latter still sporting a shoulder-length, over-the-ears hairdon't. In the midst of this torture, the juke autoselects "Won't Get Fooled Again" at precisely the time the interview cuts to footage of thousands of zeroes bopping to a Styx reunion concert. (These are undoubtedly the same citizens who consider Bronson Pinchot a "comic genius" and go into a spastic hissy fit if you light a cigarette within 352 yards of them.)

Sorry, Pete Townshend, but said audio image proved plenty will be fooled again. Nonetheless, of all the songs for the machine to not only contain but choose to play at that exact moment, the Who hit was an incredible irony. Hmm, maybe the jukebox is haunted by Keith Moon.

A ghost in the machine brings to mind one of the front-runners in the World's Most Annoying Celebrity contest, Sting. It appears the Alan Alda Of Rock went through a late-summer spell in which he felt compelled to compete with homely hippie Janeane Garofolo and Rosie "Butch As The Bears' Locker Room" O'Donnell in the Relentless Overexposure Bowl.



There was the Stinker on the eMpTyV Awards, crooning in a fake black accent that recalled his preposterous phony Caribbean lilt of yore. A couple of weeks later, Mr. Nashville himself turned up - and stomachs - on the Country Music Awards. And let's not overlook his showing at Princess Di's funeral. Couldn't you just see Sting - who initially rode to fame on the coattails of anarchistic Britpunk - practicing his knighthood acceptance speech in the limo?

Sting may be in perpetual need of a firm butt-boot, but 1997's single-incident epitome of pomposity was pulled off by MSNBC's moderator John Gibson the day the Mars probe landed. Clearly contemptuous about hosting a program from Roswell and unprofessionally combative with phoning-in viewers, Gibson introduced a segment about the late author of *Cosmos* by pronouncing the scientist's name Carl "suh-GONN" (rhymes with "the don"). During the course of the segment, both Sagan's long-time colleague from NASA and Carl's live-in female companion referred to Mister "SAY-ginn" (rhymes with "Reagan"), using the pronunciation accepted by "billions and billions" of others. However, rather than being embarrassed by his faux pas and extremely grateful for the subtle way the astrogazer's closest friends corrected him, the bespectacled buffoon had the consummate arrogance to make a parting comment about "suh-GONN"!!

Imagine the degree of pigheadedness one must possess to consider himself a holder of superior knowledge over someone who knows a subject biblically! Well, if there is anything minutely positive to be said of John Gibson it is: at least he doesn't preach. Too bad that doesn't apply to NY Post and TV Guide sports critic Phil Mushnick.

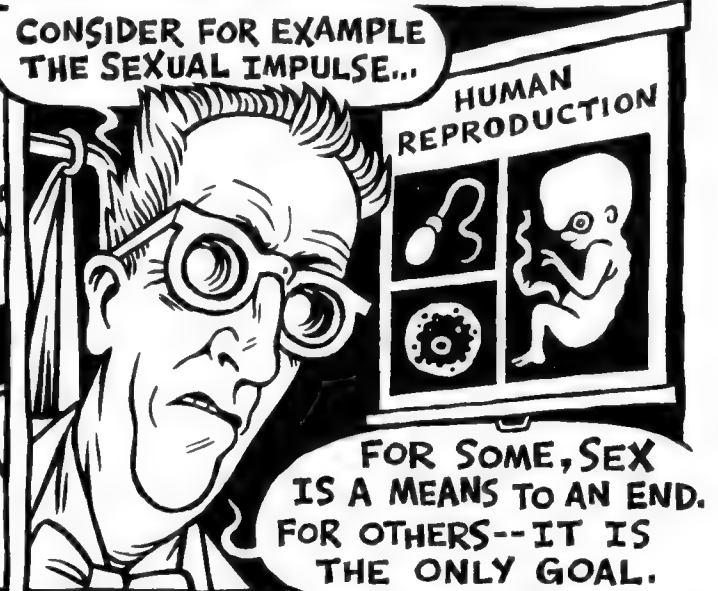
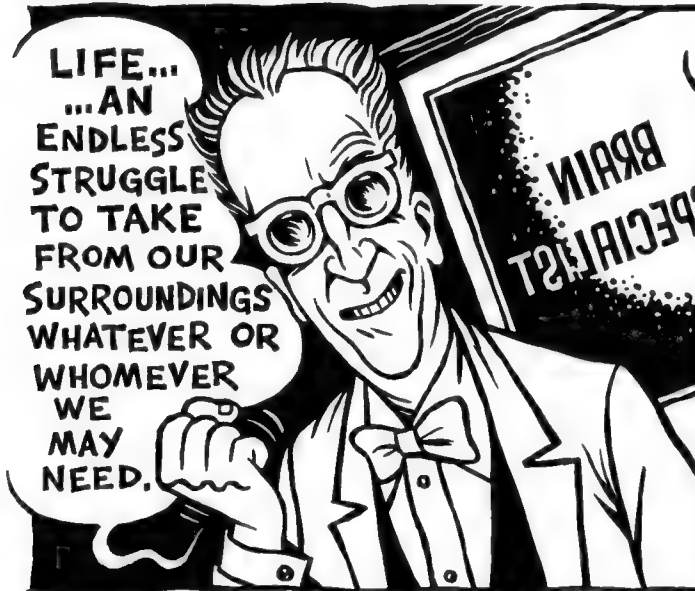
Like most modern McCarthys with an ax to grind, Mush employs the concerned parent angle as a basis for his moralizing. Despite all the corruption, petulance, exploitation and greed in the higher-profile sports, one of the wet blanket's most consistent targets is our beloved pro wrestling, particularly World Championship Wrestling (WCW). Whatever your opinion of mat mayhem may be, you should find the following quite interesting. The Post and Guide are owned by Rupert Murdoch. And who is Murdoch's fiercest rival in the media mogul business? Ted Turner. And who happens to own WCW? You guessed it.

Is the above merely a magical coincidence, meaning Munchdick's overwrought, misguided pontifications are grounded in sincerity? OR is this a case of an apple-polishing whore writing what will earn him the most points with the boss? Observing the frequency with which the hyper indignant are eventually caught with their hidden agendas down, I suspect the latter. Either way, something stinks in Gotham. Making matters worse, PM commits the venial sin of stereotyping every grappling fan as doltish trailer trash. Hey, pal, insulting the ringsiders is my job! On top of that, many of us who follow the stretchin' profession are better-educated and better-fixed (and better writers) than you, Philsy . . . without doing any public butt-smooching to get there.

EXTRAORDINARY INSIGHT: If a person pens a stage script, he's a playwright. I suppose that makes my Uncle Willie a numberswright . . . Who performs porn starlets' boob jobs, anyway, Jeff Healey? I've seen the best bods of my generation destroyed by Dow-Corning . . . A tip of the Stately chapeau goes to Clairol Color King Steve Tyler for keeping a straight face while acting out songs of teen angst . . . Though I despise the karaoke crap rap has become, one keen musical historian cracks me up. He boasts about "taking hits from the Eighties," while rhyming over Kool & The Gang's "Hollywood Swinging" - which was released in 1973 . . . I see the usual suspects lined up to make the Fleetwood Mac tribute album. Isn't Mac exactly what alternative was supposed to be an alternative to? . . . Which reminds me, Jewel's got the pipes and pulchritude, yet still seems to wind up with goony guys. Could it be her personality? I prescribe a Ramada Mount Manor Rendezvous to straighten the poor dear out. (And there won't be any need for you to "slip on my PJs," toots.) . . . ESPN2's absurdly reverential approach to hot-dogging in an attempt to legitimize show-off contest may be a contender; but is there any activity in the entire universe wherein co-conspirators create a more extremely unwarranted facade of "importance" than a fashion show? Go ahead, name one. I quadruple-dare you.

HUBBA HUBBA HONEYES: As misfortune would have it, I don't have adequate space left to go into the usual explanation and analysis here; so this issue I'll nominate the gal most popular at petting parties . . . your sister. ■

MISTER PONS MEETS SEWER GIRL ©1996 DANNY HELLMAN





NOW YOU COME DOWN HERE...
...TO ME...OOHHH



YOU FUCK ME NOW,
BRAIN STEM...
...MAKE HIM
GROW STRONG.



GRRR!

MMM
...THEM
DEVILS...THEY COVER HIM IN
CEMENT...HE SHRINK--HE
SUFFOCATE...BUT HE NOT DEAD...OH



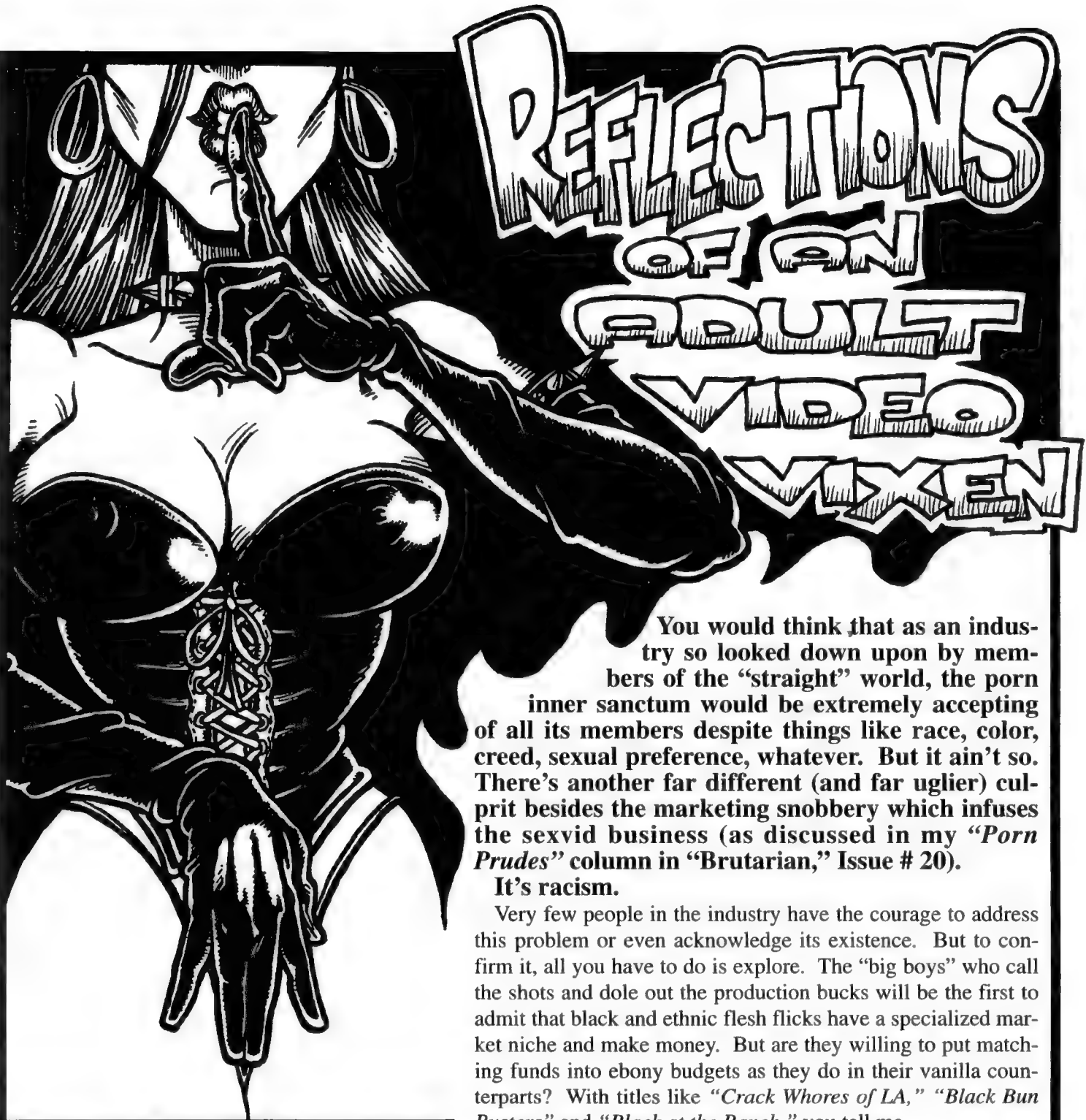
--RRR??

NNHH...HEAT OF
SEX MAKE HIM STRONG..
HE BREAK FREE!!



BREEENK!





REFLECTIONS OF AN ADULT VIDEO VIXEN

You would think that as an industry so looked down upon by members of the "straight" world, the porn inner sanctum would be extremely accepting of all its members despite things like race, color, creed, sexual preference, whatever. But it ain't so. There's another far different (and far uglier) culprit besides the marketing snobbery which infuses the sexvid business (as discussed in my "Porn Prudes" column in "Brutarian," Issue # 20).

It's racism.

Very few people in the industry have the courage to address this problem or even acknowledge its existence. But to confirm it, all you have to do is explore. The "big boys" who call the shots and dole out the production bucks will be the first to admit that black and ethnic flesh flicks have a specialized market niche and make money. But are they willing to put matching funds into ebony budgets as they do in their vanilla counterparts? With titles like "*Crack Whores of LA*," "*Black Bun Busters*" and "*Black at the Ranch*," you tell me.

How many dark-skinned actresses do you see on box covers, not counting ethnic flicks where their bubble butts are dangled like carrots in front of horny ponies? The answer: few to none.

When I was Vivid Video's fair-haired scriptress (actually dark-haired and olive skinned but who's counting), penning perverted sagas for their mostly blonde battalion of contract players, I was commissioned to concoct star vehicles for Heather Hunter, their lone Negress signed to an exclusive con-

by Ariel Hart

Racism Rears Its Ugly Head

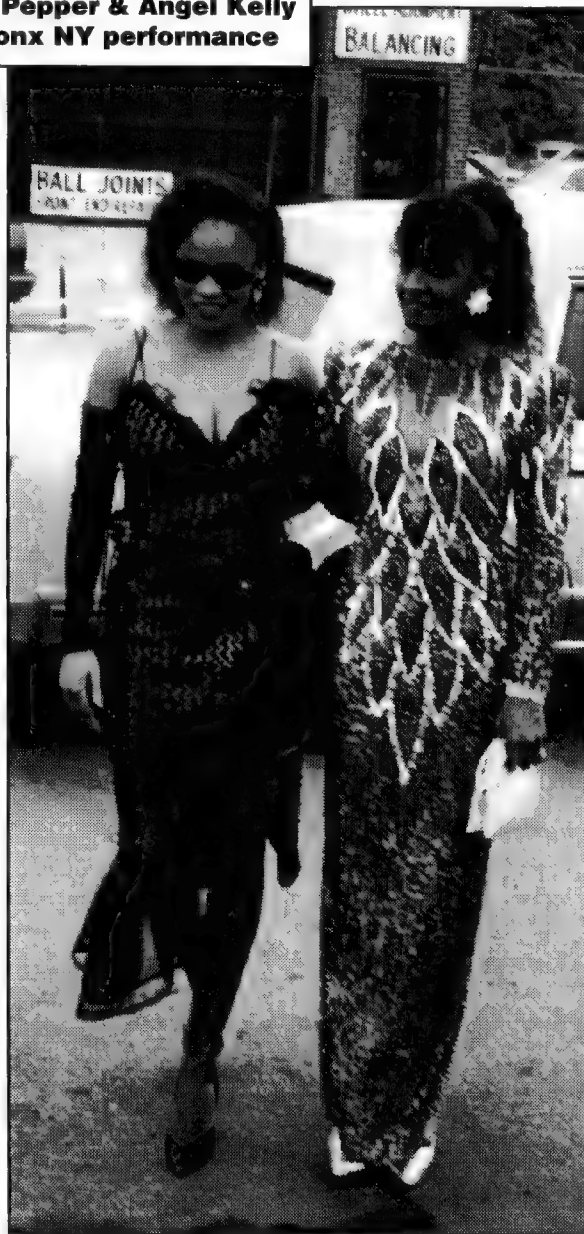
**Jeannie Pepper & Angel Kelly
at a Bronx NY performance**

tract. I was told, in no uncertain terms, that Hunter was so light complected that she "wasn't considered black" by her white fans. (Did they conduct scientific surveys, I wondered?) For this reason it was okay to pair Hunter with pale-faced co-stars like Tom Byron. The public, wouldn't fly into a tizzy, compared with, if, for example, I mated Sean Michaels with (gasp) Christy Canyon.

You see, company heads get away with racism by blaming it on the public. The public doesn't want it, doesn't buy it, doesn't demand it—especially in Alabama. For this reason, they claim it's justified. They also swear that the cable companies they sell the cleaned-up versions of these flicks to shy away from mixed muff-diving. But I wonder how they know this little tidbit if interracial coupling is rarely, if ever, presented to cable audiences.

Once upon a time, I almost broke through Vivid's invisible color barrier. It was when I was writing *"Bonnie & Clyde"* back in 1993. The 16mm film was set in Texas in the 1930's. One minor character was a deaf mute. It seemed perfect to make "Simon" a black man who learned early on in life that it was easier to be silent to stay out of trouble in the prejudiced South. In an unexpected plot twist (yes, some porn movies actually do have plots), Simon speaks up to save the lead characters, the cuddly, lovable out-laws with out of control libidos played by Racquel Darrian and her hubby Derrick Lane.

Okay, so it's not Voltaire, but it's still a little bit more than your average bedroom bounce. I actually tried to say something amid porn's strict, confining parameters. I was shocked when the direc-



tor Paul Thomas liked the character and the scene. Sean Michaels, a looker and a strong actor (and an African American) was slated to play "Simon." I was able to toss all sorts of mild racial references into the brew. It even gave me a chance to take some gentle but much-needed swipes at the porn industry.

But alas, in the 11th hour, I received a distraught telephone call from the PT. It seemed the powers that be at Vivid shot down our idea. "Simon" had to be changed to a white guy—and pronto—just days before the shoot was scheduled. So, in one fell swoop, we lost our "message" and got T.T. Boy, a stud who can't act his way out of a parking ticket.

At various industry trade shows, I've had the opportunity to discuss this race problem with a number of actresses. Talented, beautiful ladies like Dominique Simone have confided in me that they get paid less money than their ivory-skinned counterparts. They never get the same exposure and never get the same notoriety.

Why?

This is a question I can't answer. I also can't answer why someone with the grace and stature of Angel Kelly, who retired from the jizz biz in 1992 to

have a baby, had a verbal, six-picture, comeback deal reneged by Video Team. This is a company noted for their line of black tapes, so they know exactly where their ethnic bread is buttered. Kelly, who looks better than ever, left her daughter with Mom, traveled from her Tennessee home to LA for a meeting to finalize the deal. To her shock, Video Team's head hedged and suggested she make just one movie for them instead of six. If it went well, they'd take it from there. Kelly was livid.

I wrote a movie called "Women of Color" for Paul Norman and ... Video Team. Did you know there wasn't one "woman of color" in it?

"How many comebacks do they think I can make?" Kelly told me later. "I know that video would sell through the roof. They just wanted to take the money and run. Where would that leave me? I wanted to prove myself again as a director. It's

actresses with porn deals are far too numerous to count.

Ready for another racist ride down mammary lane? Six years ago I wrote a movie called "*Women of Color*" for Paul Norman and, guess who?, Video Team. Did you know there wasn't one "woman of color" in it? Their excuse was that a black performer canceled out at the last minute. Why didn't they replace her with a dark sister? It looked ridiculous in the reviews when the critics mentioned (and rightly so) the colorless cast.

months ago, "Adult Video News," a highly-respected industry trade publication, ran a story about an ebony actress named Jordan McKnight who tested HIV-positive at least three times. Beside the news bite, they mistakenly ran a picture of Ms. Jacme, practically destroying her career. An innocent error or just another incident of "they all look alike"? And just for the record, Jacme and McKnight look nothing alike, even for colored wenches.

Black directors constantly come up against stumbling blocks when trying to secure funding for projects which are always pigeonholed as "black." "It's frustrating," says New

York based actor-turned-director Jean Valjean. "I have to plead and promise just to get money to do a halfway decent



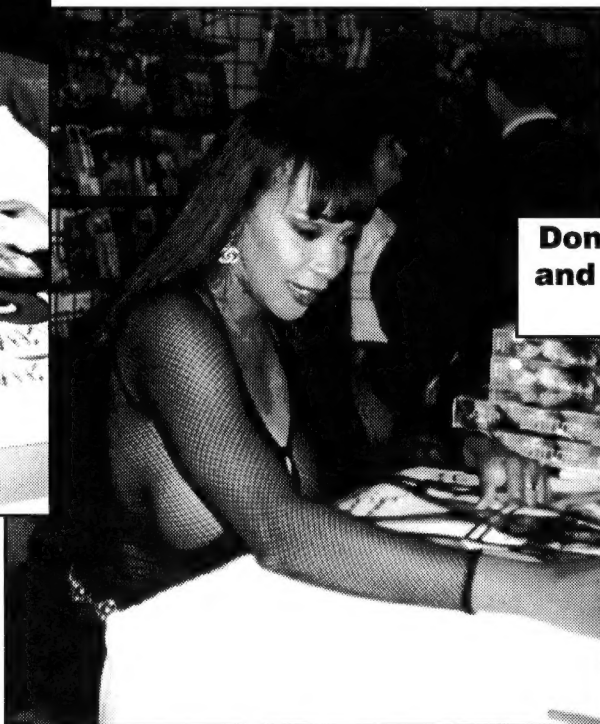
Jordan McKnight at the East Coast Video Show

not like I don't have a track record even though it's been a while since I did "*Little Miss Dangerous*" and "*Even More Dangerous*." I wanted creative control and something to bank on in my future. Video Team promised me that and more. I mean, why shouldn't I be able to make something on the 'Angel Kelly' name, too?"

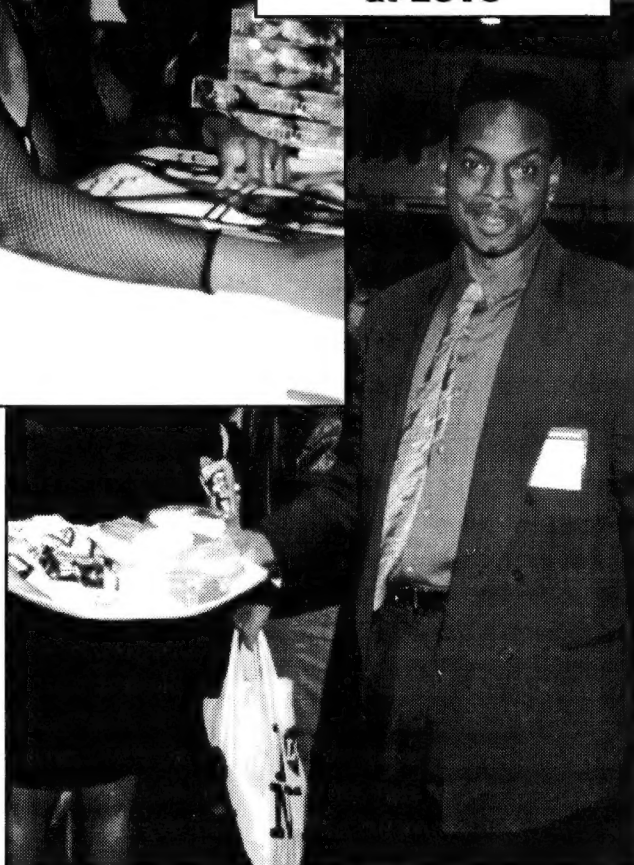
It was a very good question.

To my knowledge, there isn't one actress of color who has an exclusive contract with any distribution company while the number of white

You might be thinking that my experiences were eons ago and that the current carnal climate must be more favorable in terms of race. But the situation has gotten worse, not better. Ask any black performer. Ask Janet Jacme. A couple of



Dominique Simone and Ron Hightower at ECVS



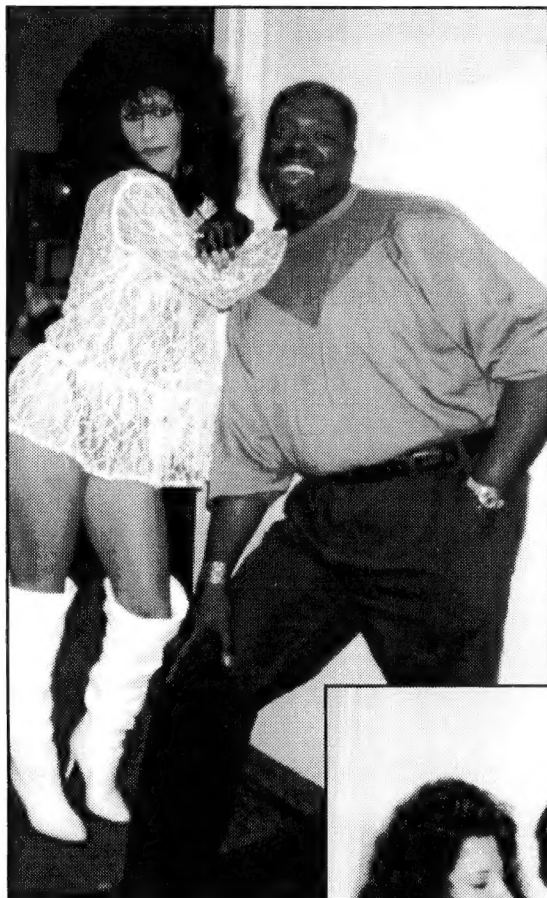
video. I constantly get told there are no pretty girls on the East Coast but I know what they really mean is there are no pretty black girls. Period."

Despite the minuscule budgets he's allotted (when, in comparison, white directors are given two, even three times the funding he is), Valjean has managed to make memo-

tion tape called "Sword Swallowers" and "Black Velvet 3" are proof. His most recent effort "Afrodisiac III" (note the quasi-racist spelling) promises to offer something more

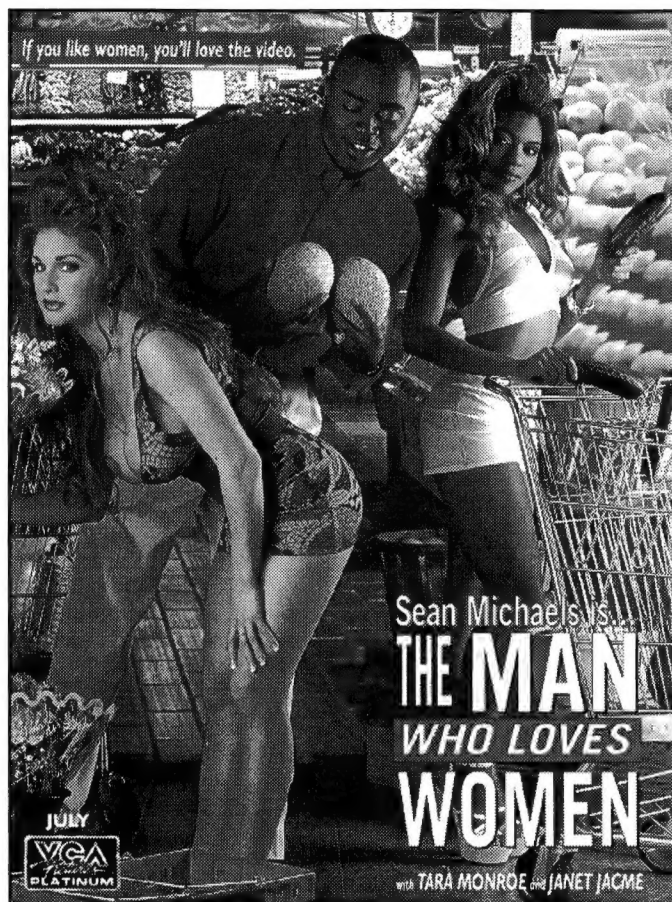
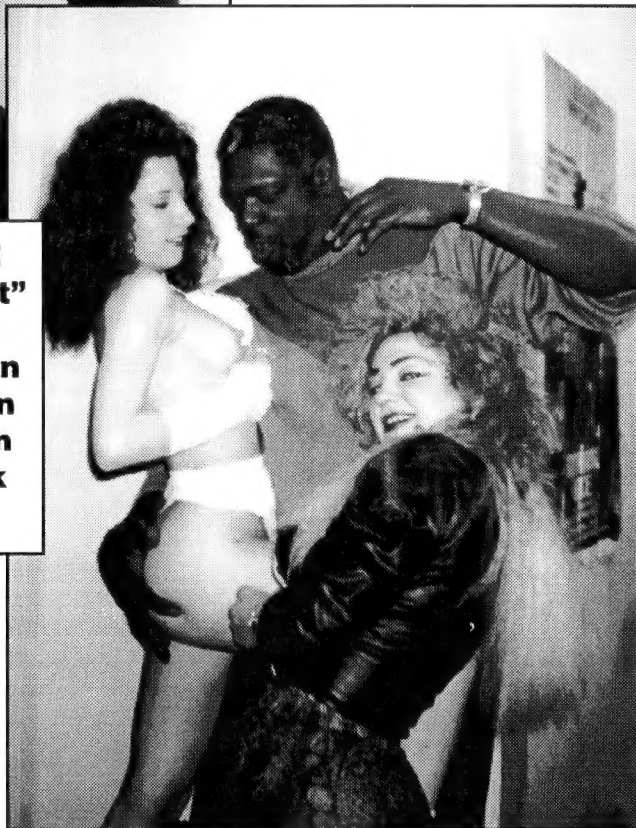
than your standard outdoor gangbang barbecue. "It's a true Rainbow Coalition," Valjean says proudly, "with performers from creamy white to dark chocolate brown and everything else in between."

It's so disheartening that in the wake of the Million Man March, equal-opportunity employment and the like that an



Jean Valjean and several "tit contest" models clowning around in the green room of Manhattan Cable TV's "The In and Out with Dick Show"

rable sexvids which have garnered awards nominations as well as showed steady sales. "Harlem Honies," a racially-mixed compila-

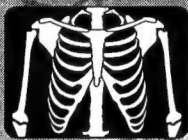


industry as unconventional as the sex biz falls prey to small-mindedness credited only to interbred, sheet-wearing rednecks. Maybe it's idealistic to think there should be no colors in a business where we're all considered slime by the rest of society. Not black slime, not white slime, not Latino slime, not Asian slime. Just plain slime.

But despite porn's prejudiced climate, I am especially proud of one particular effort. It was finally produced after about five years of making the rounds. Sean Michaels had the guts to make "Love in Black & White" for a company called The Odyssey Group. Not only was the cast an ethnic buffet, but the story was inspired by Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever." It's all about how we judge each other, by color and by career choice. I like to think it actually said something.

But the real question is, was anyone listening?

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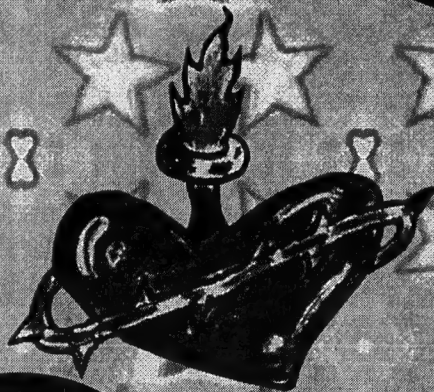
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